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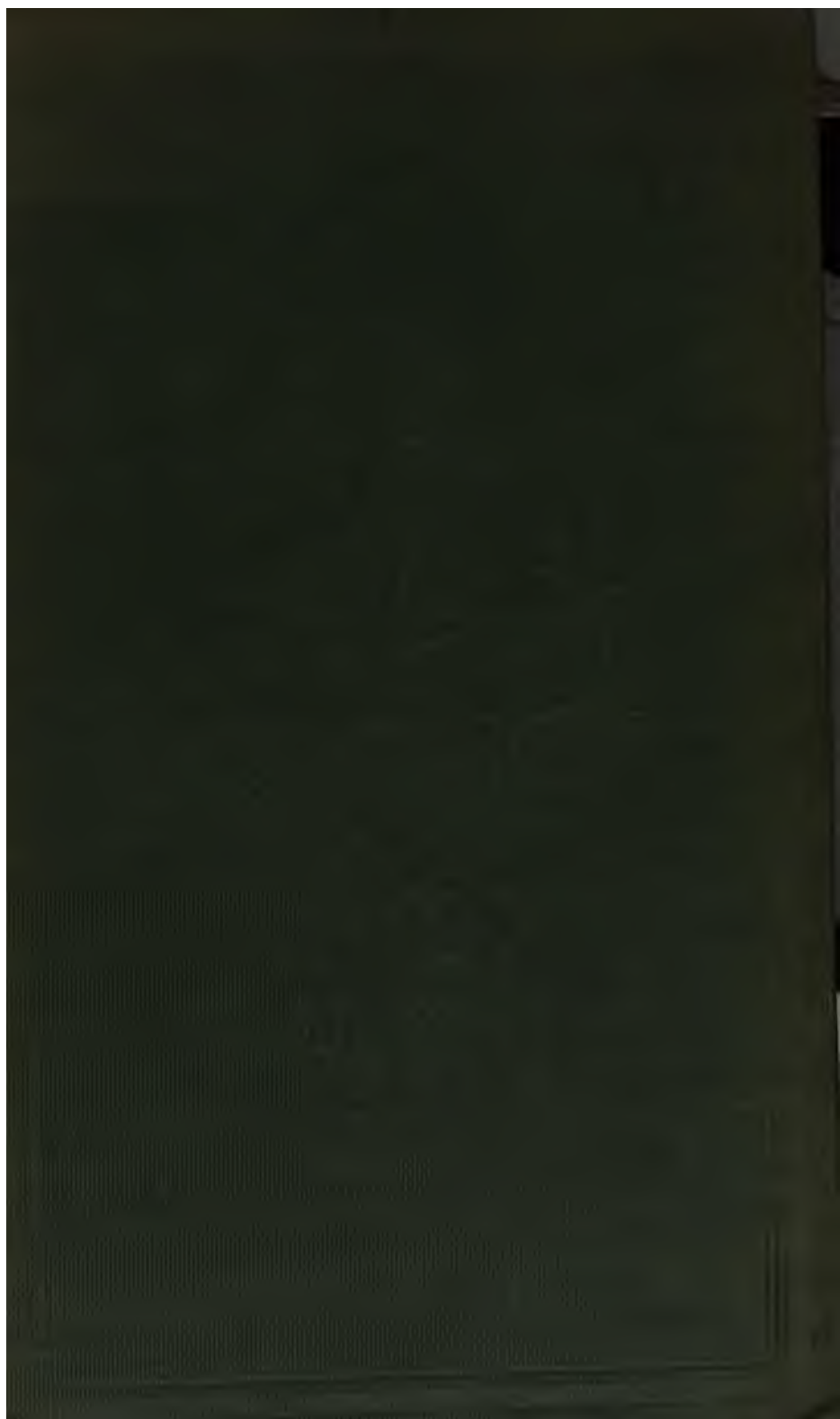
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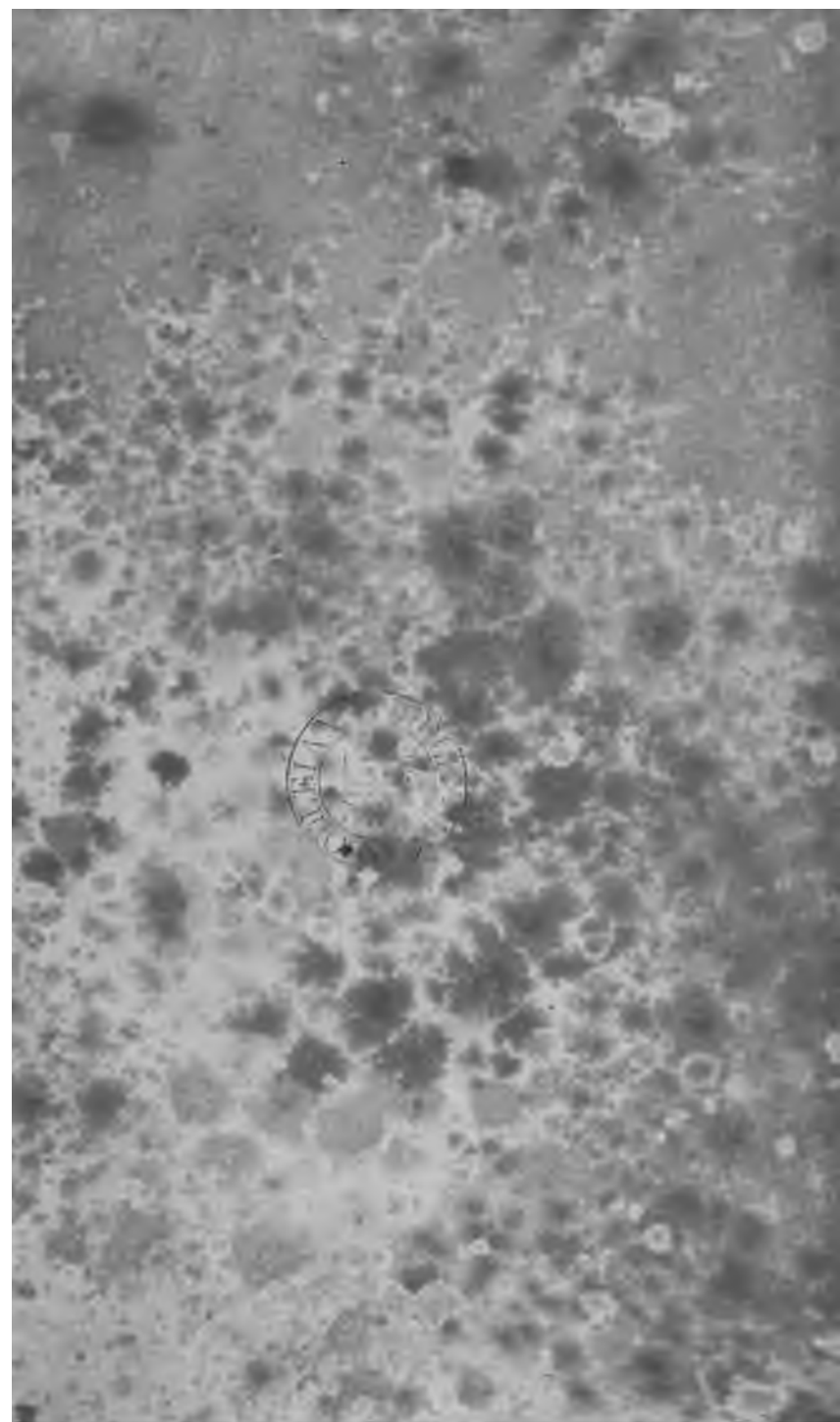




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THE STAGE COACH;

OR,

THE ROAD OF LIFE.

BY

JOHN MILLS, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1843.

LONDON :
P. SHOBERL, JUN., 51, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET,
PRINTER TO H. R. H. PRINCE ALBERT.

THE STAGE COACH,

OR

THE ROAD OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BETROTHED.

It is now nearly twenty years ago, (said the speaker,) that the events I'm about to relate took place. I shall not trouble you with the details of my family history, or the chain of events which left me, at the age of twenty-one, in possession of a good fortune, and a commission in the 4th Dragoon Guards; sufficient to say that such was my position at the time I am now about referring to.

Soon after my joining the regiment, which was stationed at Canterbury, I formed a strong friendship with a young brother officer of the name of Campbell, a frank, kind, and generous fellow. In truth, a more perfect man I never knew. With one of the strongest frames, he had even an almost feminine delicacy of appearance, so nicely proportioned was each limb and muscle. With the spirit of a lion, his heart was tender as a woman's, and his features bore the stamp of an honourable mind and rectitude of principle.

Both of us were passionately fond of field sports, and it was our custom after mess to retire to one or the other's quarters, either to make arrangements for the following day's hunting or shooting, or to fight our old battles over again. It was about two months after the commencement of our acquaintance that we were to join the hounds together for the first time, and as this day was fraught with some important incidents, I shall describe it minutely.

It was a morning in March. The rough, burly wind swept hummingly through branch and through bough, "piping before the flowers like a bacchanal." Heavy dew hung upon the greensward, glittering in the glad sunshine, and the songs of birds, trilled in wild delight, rang merrily through cover, copse, and wild. Spring, smiling, pretty Spring, was dancing in her early, unfolding loveliness. Flowers peeped from their frosted trance, and welcomed their mistress as she pressed each bud and blossom. The bee stole from his almost storeless hive, and recommenced his busy, thrifty task. Things that love the summer hailed the herald of their joy, and revelled in nature's freshly-decked beauty.

The meet was just seven miles from the town, near the ruins of a monastery, now almost levelled with the ground by time and decay. As we suddenly came upon a heap of moss-grown stones, we were somewhat surprised at seeing a lady sitting alone upon

them, attired in a scarlet riding-habit, and holding the rein of a superb white palfrey, cropping the grass at her feet. There was something strange in the expression of her features as we met her gaze, although more beautiful man's eyes never rested on. Her hair, black as the raven's-wing, was looped in two thick braids on each side of her face, radiant with loveliness. Her dark, thick brows arched above a pair of hazel eyes, that flashed again as they seemed to penetrate the object of their regard ; and her complexion rivalled the half-blown rose that she was carelessly pulling to pieces leaf by leaf, and letting them fall scattering in the wind. Her figure was tall and slight, but the tight habit shewed a bust exquisitely moulded ; and although, as I have before stated, there was something inexpressibly strange in her intense and almost fiery glance, more like the startled look of a surprised stag than any thing else, I never saw so lovely a being before.

“Who can she be?” exclaimed Campbell.

“Heaven knows!” replied I, “but there’ll be no difficulty in learning. I’m only astonished that we have not heard of her before.”

“Heard of her before!” repeated Campbell, involuntarily. “She cannot reside near, or we *must* have heard of her,” continued he, portraying by his manner an extraordinary interest concerning the fair stranger.

“Here comes somebody who doubtlessly can inform us,” said I, seeing old Morgan, the huntsman, winding up the lane towards us with the hounds.

“Ay,” returned Campbell, “that old fellow is acquainted with every one, from the squire to the scullion, within a ring of twenty miles. We will sound him upon this subject,” continued he, spurring his horse towards the huntsman.

“Mornin, gentlemen, mornin,” said Morgan, taking the cap from his bald and frosted head and saluting our approach. “A beau-

tiful oily wind from the South ; only a *leetle* too much of it, gentlemen."

"There's a young lady, dressed in scarlet, sitting on those ruins there," said Campbell, pointing to the spot where he had seen her ; "and I fancy she will join us. Do you know who she is?"

"Know who she is, sir!" exclaimed the huntsman. "War' horse, Ringwood," said he, giving a hound close under his horse's feet a hint to take better care of himself. "That I do ; there can be only one of her sort in this county."

"What do you mean?" I inquired.

"We haven't much time to talk about her," replied the huntsman, pulling a watch from his poke ; "our master'll be here in five minutes : but, as she'll be with us, or *before* us, the whole day," said Morgan, laying strong emphasis on the "before," "I'll just give you her pedigree and training. Her proper name is Miss Alice de Grey ; but she's for the most

part called the Lady of the Hill. A nicer lady, gentlemen, never lived on hill or in valley, although some folk think her ways rather odd, and, perhaps, they are, seeing that they are different to most ladies of her station. She lives about twelve mile from here, in a very old, queer-shaped building, called the Rookery, and is quite her own mistress, being without father and mother ever since her childhood; and no one ever seeing after her, except an old nurse, provided by a gentleman, living a long way off, called her guardian, I believe. Miss Alice doesn't visit any of the neighbouring gentry, people say because she can't sing, play, and dance like other young ladies of quality. But, Lor, gentlemen," continued Morgan, turning his eyes to heaven, "if ye'd heard her give tongue, as I have once or twice at sunrise, you'd say it was babble for an angel's lug. However, it's quite true that she doesn't go to parties, or give any; but keeps herself to

herself, and seems to think of nothing but doing all the good she can to every body, every where. There's not a poor person, God knows how far from the Rookery, that knows what it is to want. Her bounty never comes to a check, but is ever in full cry on a right scent. And then her riding! But you'll have a sample o' that, gentlemen. By G—d, she goes like a pigeon! Is she on a white horse?" inquired he.

"Yes," replied Campbell.

"Ah! that's Moonbeam—that is," rejoined Morgan; "and if she doesn't take the sunshine out of all of us to-day I shall be surprised."

At this moment Squire Merton, the master of the hounds, came up on his hack, accompanied by Miss de Grey, mounted on her snowy horse, causing the Squire to laugh immoderately at something she was relating to him.

"She's a wonderful favourite of the

Squire's," said the huntsman in an undertone, baring his head as the two arrived.

"Well, Morgan," said the young lady, in one of the most ringing voices I had ever heard, and looking archly at the huntsman, "what excuse shall we have to-day? Is the ground too dry or too wet? or is the wind from the frigid North? or which of the many ills, to which blank and bloodless days are prone, may be ascribed to this?"

"Not one, I hope, my lady," replied Morgan, smiling, "if we find—and find we shall, I'll offer no excuse for poor, or even middlin sport."

"In that case," added Miss de Grey, "the cap shall be lined with gold at the 'who-whoop!'" and the halloo rang from her lips, in the loud, clear tone of a flute.

"Bless that voice!" said the Squire, laughing, "it goes into one's heart, as music should do. But come, Morgan, our time is spent. Try the bankside gorse first;" and climbing

into his hunter's saddle, the whole field, which was now a large one, followed to the verge of a neighbouring cover.

The merry pack had scarcely crashed into the prickly furze when a hound gave tongue.

"Hark to Ruin! hark to Ruin!" hallooed the Squire, cracking his heavy thong. "Hark! hark!"

"I'm afeard it isn't true, sir," said Morgan, driving his horse into the gorse; "Ruin will babble now and then."

Unfortunately for the huntsman, this prediction was hardly made before a fox was "tally-hoed" away by the first whip, stationed at the head of the cover.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Miss Alice. "Error the first, Mr. Morgan. Forward, forward!" she shouted, laughing heartily, and switching her horse to the tails of the leading hounds which flew to the inspiring Tally-ho!

"There's the Diana of Kent!" exclaimed the Squire, delighted, riding close after her.

“Hold hard, my flower!” continued he; “give them time to get at it.”

In a few moments every hound was laid on, loading the air with their joyous notes, and skimming after their fleet cunning victim, like petrels over the foamy surge.

High on her haunches Moonbeam reared, as she fretted and pulled upon the checking rein; but when it was slackened, away she bounded with her fair mistress, with the speed of a bird, on the wing of sudden and ecstatic freedom.

“Ah!” exclaimed Morgan, sweeping past me, “the Lady of the Hill will lead us all to-day.”

At first our course was over some extensive and flat fields, intercepted by wide and deep miry ditches, and there being no hedge or fence of any kind to mark their whereabouts, the horses were upon them before being aware of the necessity for a gallant jump. In consequence of this, not a few of their riders

found themselves flying over their steed's heads, and floundering up to their necks in mud, from the sudden and pitching halt.

Miss de Grey, glancing back, and occasionally catching a glimpse of one or two of these mishaps, made her laugh echo far and wide, and, waving her hand, beckoned them on in derision. Over hedge, ditch, gate, wall, and brook, the Lady of the Hill swept with the ease of a fleeting shadow. On she went, never turning a visible hair's breadth from the course the hounds took.

"That's what I call riding straight to hounds," said the Squire, spurring his horse after her.

Reynard had been pointing for a large and thick wood, in which there were some very strong earths; but, unluckily for him, the crafty stopper's spade had clinked there the night before, and closed every retreat. Through the dark, deep wood, the hounds pressed him with but a little space between

them and his brush, giving no law for exhausted lungs and wearied limbs, and making the welkin tremble with sounds sufficient to charm the hollow oaks. Hares skipped from their forms, and rabbits to their burrows, scraped deepest in the earth. The affrighted ringdove cleaved the air, and made her pinions whistle as she winged her flight to a more secluded spot. Even the sleepy owls were roused from their lethargy, and winked and blinked their glassy eyes, and peeped from their homes in the rotten, time-worn trees, till all sounds of the chace had passed far away.

On, on we went at flying speed; and as we came to an open heath, over which the pack swept with the fox in view, not half of the field was up. "Tallyho, tallyho!" hallooed the Squire; "the brush is thine, my Queen of Kent," continued he, being within a few yards of Miss de Grey's side.

A light laugh came from the lady in response, and, switching Moonbeam, she made a greater distance between herself and the remaining followers of the chace, as if determined that none should be in advance of or near the Lady of the Hill.

“Hold hard!” halloood the huntsman, as Miss Alice kept her horse’s head straight for a high wall, on the verge of the common; “to the right, my lady, to the right; ye can’t go there,” said he, waving his hand, to beckon her away.

“By St. Paul!” exclaimed the Squire, with terror expressed in his voice and features, “she is going to take it.”

It was true enough. Straight as a bolt from a crossbow, the lady held her horse towards the bold leap, and when within a few feet of it, she cracked her whip round Moonbeam’s sleek sides, and, rising in the air like a bird springing for its flight, was poised in

it for a brief moment, and when over, they dipped without ringing a clink from Moonbeam's ironed hoofs.

"My God!" exclaimed Campbell, pale with fear for her safety, "how desperate she rides!"

"Desperate!" repeated the Squire, as if weighing the term. "Yes," added he, "it *was* desperate."

Right and left we turned to avoid the barrier, with the majority of the hounds, for, with the exception of two couple of the leaders who managed to effect a scramble over, not another even attempted it. The fox, who nearly fell into the jaws of his enemies, as he balanced to and fro as he reached the top of the wall, now led us over a beautiful woodland country, with scarcely an acre of any thing else but soft, pliant, emerald turf. The leaps were now frequent, but not formidable; and as the leading hounds with Miss de Grey were some distance before

us, going at a tremendous pace, we tried our best to reach them.

“He’s for the shrubbery-pits,” said the Squire, “and here I go for a nick;” and, bending his horse to the left, he quitted the direct course of the fox.

Many, whose puffing and blowing horses told the tale of their distress, followed the Squire’s example; and, just as we came in view of Moonbeam and her rider, who were streaking up a hill within little more than a quarter of a mile of us, not a soul was riding straight to hounds but the huntsman, the whips, myself, Campbell, and the Lady of the Hill.

“We’ve got it all to ourselves now,” said Morgan.

“Yes,” replied I. “But I think Miss de Grey will say that she has got it all to *her-self*.”

“That’s just her object, sir,” replied the huntsman. “And, Lor, how she’ll banter

us for refusin the wall ! Howsomever," continued he, " no man in his senses would take six feet o' stone with no more breath in his horse's bellows than in a blown egg."

" But a lady did," rejoined I.

" Ay," added the huntsman, " but women has no sense. They run into danger like blind puppies into water, 'cause they can't see it."

With this uncomplimentary opinion of the cause of the fair sex's deeds of courage, which savoured of an excuse for the want of his own, Morgan drove his rowels into his hunter's flanks and lifted the tail hounds " for'ard."

" Now we're up again," said Campbell. As we crossed a short thickset hedge into the field, Moonbeam was skimming across.

I, at this moment, felt my jaded horse reel under my weight, and, as I pricked him with my spur, found the summons unanswered.

" I'm done up, by heaven !" exclaimed I, vexed beyond description, as I pulled my horse to a stand-still and dismounted, finding

it impossible to proceed another yard. Indeed, so exhausted was he and blown, that I had some difficulty in preventing his falling to the ground, when I had relieved him from my weight.

After slackening the girths and staying for a few minutes to regain a little strength in wind and limb, I most disconsolately led him towards a narrow, winding lane on the verge of the field, for the purpose of retracing my steps towards home. There was a very steep bank to descend from the field into the road, and it was with great difficulty that my horse, after sliding upon his haunches and caving the earth to a considerable extent, managed to reach the bottom with safety. Being a perfect stranger in this part of the county, I hailed a man at work in his cottage-garden, and inquired my way.

“ It’s a long twenty mile from here, measter, Canterbury be,” replied he ; “ but, if ye keep up this slough for a matter o’

three mile, that'll take ye into the straight highway."

"Does it twist and turn about in this style for the three miles?" inquired I.

"Yes, zur," returned he. "The chap wot made this road was cock-eyed, d'ye see, and that account for its being all awry."

A more whimsical road cannot be imagined. It was impossible to see twenty yards a-head, from the continued twists and turns; and the banks which flanked its rugged sides appeared to be cut so as to render them as precipitous as possible. Pools of stagnant water stood here and there; and large tufts of grass, rearing themselves in deeply-carved ruts, showed that the wheel seldom pressed their miry roots.

Leading my horse with the rein over my wrist, wearied and dispirited, I continued to plod through the lane, and, as I turned one of its abrupt corners, my heart leaped to my throat at seeing, close to my feet, a white

horse stretched dead in the road. In an instant I saw that it was Moonbeam. A side-saddle, with a broken pummel, was twisted under him, the crupper snapped, and his bridle dragged from over his ears.

It was too obvious what had occurred. Not being aware of the road, he had been urged at speed to jump the trifling fence which bounded it, and then down the dizzy height he must have come, entailing destruction upon himself and rider.

Expecting to see the confirmation of what I feared, I looked tremblingly about the road, and saw, within a few feet of the horse's head, a few drops of blood, and, upon a bush close by, some small pieces of scarlet cloth, which hung on the thorns. These were sufficient proofs of what had happened; and, almost palsied with horror, I tightened my girths, and, mounting my horse, galloped in the only direction the unfortunate lady could have been borne, which was the one I had been pursuing.

I had not gone far when I saw Campbell's horse tied to the gate of a farm-house. Without taking time to better my own, I sprung from my saddle and hastened towards it. Groans and sobs saluted my ear before I reached the threshold, and, as I was about flinging open the door, Campbell, ghastly white, hurried out, and, seeing me, exclaimed, "My God, she's killed!" and rushed past me.

CHAPTER II.

THE BETROTHED CONTINUED.

Upon entering the house I discovered Miss de Grey stretched upon a bed in an inner room, surrounded by a group of weeping children and a woman. The latter was almost frantic with grief, continuing to wring her hands, beat her bosom, and between her sobs and groans exclaim, "Lord, have mercy on us ! what will become o' the poor now ? Sorrow to all ! sorrow to all !"

The sight was truly heartbreaking. With hair dishevelled and streaming down her pale features, scratched and torn in rude gashes, lay Miss de Grey without a symptom of life remaining. Her dress was severed into rags

and tatters, and the terrific violence of the fall was portrayed in every part of her disfigured person.

“Is she dead, *quite* dead?” inquired the poor woman, as I pressed my fingers on her pulse.

I could discover no fluttering in this index of life, but gave immediate directions for the loosening of her dress, and other trifling orders preparatory for the surgeon’s visit, which was momentarily expected, Campbell having gone for him.

As I continued to watch anxiously for a sign of returning life, the neighbouring cottagers stole silently into the room, and whispered their grief and forebodings one to the other, while tears of sincere sorrow coursed down their cheeks in streams.

“She’s gone, Biddy,” said one, choking with grief, “she’s gone. Woe to the poor ! Their friend’s in heaven !”

“God be bountiful to her as she has been

to us !” added another. “The flower’s nipped in the morning of her life. Lord, have mercy on us !”

Some knelt by the bedside and prayed fervently for her restoration ; others, whose grief was beyond their control, wept like their half-frightened, half-sorrowing children, and all evinced an intensity of grief for their beautiful, generous, and ill-fated benefactress.

In about twenty minutes, which appeared to me the slowest that were ever ticked in the balance of time, Campbell entered the room, accompanied by a surgeon. Taking a glance at the inanimate lady, he shook his head despondingly and said, “I fear all earthly aid is futile.”

“Say not so, sir, say not so !” ejaculated a voice in the deepest consternation. It was Squire Merton, pushing his way through the throng congregated in the room.

“I fear such to be the case, sir,” added the surgeon, taking a case of instruments

from his pocket. "But this room must be cleared," added he. "I can have no one present but those who are necessary for my assistance."

All left except myself, Campbell, and the Squire, who, although incapable from his agitation to render any assistance, could not be persuaded to quit the apartment.

"Raise her gently in your arms, in a reclining posture," said the surgeon to me.

Quickly running his fingers over her limbs and body, he twisted a ligament round her exquisitely-moulded arm, and forcing a lancet into the vein, a crimson drop or two came reluctantly from the wound ; but that was all. The surgeon gave a look of entire hopelessness, and motioned me to place her in her former posture, when, as I moved to do so, a clear current trickled from the opened vein, and, as her head rested on the pillow, a sigh broke from her lips.

"Cheering symptoms, cheering symptoms!"

exclaimed the surgeon. "We shall save her!" continued he.

The Squire clutched the doctor's hand and said, "I'll give a thousand for the hope, and ten for its being realized."

"There's not a limb fractured," said the surgeon, "and I begin to think no bone; but we shall see that presently," added he. "Thank God! there are sparks of life remaining!"

"Amen, amen!" returned the Squire fervently.

"There's a great crowd outside," observed Campbell, "scarcely able to remain there, such is their desire to learn how their dear lady is; shall I inform them of our hopes?"

"By all means," replied the Squire.

Scarcely had Campbell gone from the room when a murmur, like the hum of bees, was heard, and a suppressed but audible shout of joy.

"We should feel in these parts," said the

Squire, "that the sun had set for ever, if any thing took from us the Lady of the Hill."

"Ah! indeed, Mr. Merton," added the doctor, "she's the sunshine to many hearts, and may God restore her to them!"

"He will, sir," returned the Squire confidently, and rising from the edge of the bed to take a closer view of the sufferer's pallid features—"He will, sir—I'm sure he will."

The blood had flowed freely for some seconds, and the fluttering pulse, like a flame kindling from smothered embers, flickered, beat, and stopped, and then throbbed again, as if impatient of its newly-gained action. At length the ashylips separated from being firmly fixed, and the silken lashes of the eyes gradually became untwined, until the eyes once more were visible. A faint smile spread itself over her countenance as Miss de Grey endeavoured to raise herself, but, being instantly checked by the surgeon, she motioned for the Squire to bend his ear towards her.

“Mr. Merton,” she said, “I’ll have the brush; ’tis fairly mine;” and then faintly adding, “I could have lifted the two couple and pulled him down in the open, a dozen times in the run.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” replied the Squire, delighted beyond description. “Morgan has the rascal’s brush for ye;” and then, turning to us, added, “What do ye think o’ that? There’s blood for ye!”

“Now, gentlemen,” said the surgeon, “I can dispense with your presence for that of the good woman of this house, if you will send her to me.”

The Squire pressed the hand of the patient, and then followed us from the room. After about the lapse of an hour, the doctor joined us, and said he had left his patient in a most refreshing sleep, and that there was nothing more serious than a slight concussion of the brain and some severe contusions.

“Then you deem her out of danger?” said the Squire.

“Out of all immediate danger,” was the reply; “and there is nothing to make me anticipate any; although from such an accident we cannot form a hasty conclusion.”

“When do you think she can be removed home?” asked the Squire.

“I hope in the course of to-morrow,” replied the doctor; “but I shall remain here during the night, and tend her in the double capacity of nurse and surgeon.”

“Ay, do, my good fellow,” rejoined the Squire; “and should any thing occur, let me know by Will, the second Whip, who I shall leave as a messenger. By sunrise,” continued the Squire, “I shall be here myself.”

Taking leave of the doctor, who appeared one of the most interested of the party, we mounted our horses and turned their heads towards home.

“Did you see the fall?” asked the Squire of me.

“I did not,” replied I. “My horse was

beaten to a stand-still a few minutes before it happened."

"I think—indeed I am sure no one saw it but myself," added Campbell.

"Tell us how it occurred," returned the Squire.

"A few words will suffice to do so," returned Campbell. "I was within a very short distance of Miss de Grey's side, when she turned her head, and seeing me, I suppose, approaching too near for her pleasure, she applied the whip soundly to her horse, who appeared to get the master of her, for I saw that she pulled hard from the fence, and endeavoured to follow Morgan to the left. It was too late. A moment afterwards the horse sprung over the bank—a crash—and, as I arrived on the verge, I discovered Miss de Grey lying in a bush on the opposite bank, which doubtless broke the violence of the fall, and Moonbeam in the middle of the lane, as I have since learned, with his neck broken. With-

out the loss of a moment I hastened to the spot, and, raising Miss de Grey in my arms, bore her instantly to the nearest house."

"How was it that Morgan or the Whips did not see the accident?" asked the Squire.

"They, knowing the difficulty of crossing the lane, I suppose," replied Campbell, "led towards a gate to the left, and an abrupt bend in the road perfectly hid us from their sight, although only a few yards distant."

"It was most fortunate that you chanced to see her," returned the Squire, "for in such a place she might not have been found for hours."

In the course of our journey home I put several questions to the Squire concerning Miss de Grey, and learned from him a confirmation of the huntsman's brief remarks of the morning, together with some further interesting information.

"She is one of the most extraordinary girls living," observed the Squire, "but her

eccentricities have been, as they generally are in most people, created by the peculiarity of the circumstances in which she has been placed. It may now be eighteen years ago, when her father and only parent came from the West Indies, and purchased a large estate within a short distance of mine. For a series of years his mansion, an old ruinous place, had been untenanted, and I was much pleased at the prospect of a near neighbour in the Rookery. But all advances to become friendly were rejected, not only to me, but to every one who made them. Ill health and an irritable temper, occasioned by an impaired constitution, made Mr. de Grey avoid all society; and with the exception of his daughter Alice, whom he suffered to grow up as wild as the flowers on the heath, no one, and nothing, not even a dog, was the sharer of his melancholy, hypochondriacal existence. Except on the very warmest days in summer, he never stirred from his roof, but occupied the whole of his

time in smoking, and in watching the play of his beautiful self-willed child, but without joining in it. But, notwithstanding this sullen disposition, he was a liberal and kind landlord, and was never known to turn a deaf ear to the calls of charity.

“ Without a companion, teacher, or instructor of any kind, Alice continued to while away her hours by coursing the butterfly or mocking the bird; and so shy was she of meeting any body, that no sooner did she catch a glimpse of the approach of a stranger than away she would bound with the fleetness of a fawn. Often did I attempt to waylay the timid, pretty child; but her ears and eyes were as quick as those of a fox, and I never could succeed in stealing within a short distance of her footfall.

“ Thus slipped away some four years; and at last the hermit, as Mr. de Grey was called, no longer excited curiosity, speculation, and wonderment. He pursued the same

monotonous life, and at last the Rookery was as little thought of, and as little visited or inquired about, as previous to its being occupied.

“ At length one morning brought the intelligence that Mr. de Grey had suddenly expired in a fit of apoplexy. Being the nearest neighbour, and knowing the lonely situation of his orphan, Mrs. Merton and myself hastened to the Rookery, and there found the child maddened with grief at the bereavement of her father. We used all our powers of consolation, and, at last, that sympathy which she wanted she found in my good lady; and, after some coaxing and persuading, we got her to accompany us home. This was the commencement of our intimacy, which has lasted uninterruptedly to this day.

“ In consequence, my pursuits have become hers; and, although they may be deemed ill-suited for a young lady, I should like to know if any body can shew me a better christian or

more lovely girl on this earth," said the Squire, enthusiastically. "I know," continued he, "that she has many peculiarities; among others, there's the fire of old Nick in her veins. I've not seen her roused more than once or twice in my life; but when she is—heaven and earth!—she can *look* a man of common courage white. I've seen a lawyer, who is the only executor and guardian under the will, tremble as though he had the ague, when she has bent her fiery glance on him, for tasking her about the large expenditure of her establishment."

"Does Miss de Grey live so extravagantly then?" inquired I.

"Not at all so," replied the Squire. "Four or five servants, and as many horses, are all that she has. But then, the sums she gives away annually, in various ways, are very large. Then again," resumed he, "she has imbibed her father's taste in not visiting or being visited by her neighbours; for, with the ex-

ception of myself and Mrs. Merton, no one ever enters her house, and she will meet no one at mine. And now, gentlemen," added the Squire, as we arrived at a branch of the road which led to his home, "you have the history, as far as I know it, of Miss Alice de Grey, commonly called the Lady of the Hill, whom, I fervently trust, we shall soon see again in her wonted health and beauty."

With this he bade us farewell, and took leave of us.

"This lady fair is a very strange sort of character," observed I to Campbell, after Mr. Merton had quitted us.

"As the Squire says," replied Campbell, "circumstances have rendered her different from the generality of her sex. But it would have been more strange if they had not done so, considering the peculiar way in which she has been treated."

"Total neglect of her education, and abstinence from all social association, appear to

be the passive causes of her singularities," returned I.

"Yes," added Campbell; "but then how beautiful she is! Like a wild, uncultivated flower, fresh and blooming in all its natural loveliness, unnoticed, uncared-for, unseen, and yet superior to all that art can train! Never was there such captivation in a woman before."

I looked at my friend's face. His cheeks were flushed; his eyes sparkled as he spoke; and I saw that the Lady of the Hill had made an indelible impression.

Here Mr. Banbury cleared his voice, and was about proceeding with his story, when Mr. Wirkem said—

"Stop, Dick, my boy, I can't but think we're going to have a long-winded one; so wet the red rag a little."

The President gave a significant nod at the conclusion of his remark, and emptied his own glass as pilot to the narrator.

“One word for Mr. Dick Banbury and two for himself,” whispered John Hogg to Melancholy Joey, who sat an uninterested, dreaming listener.

Mr. Wirkem, overhearing the sly innuendo, turned slowly in his chair, and, bending his chin slowly to his bosom, gave Jack a deliberate wink, as much as to say, “Catch a weasel asleep and shave him.”

“Ha! ha! ha! Oh, Mr. Wirkem, sir!” exclaimed Jack. “Them as plays with pitch must expect to ——.”

“Get pitched into,” interrupted the President, with an inward rumble, introductory to an explosive “Haw, haw,” which seemed to astonish Toddy for its length and loudness.

“Heaven preserve our ears!” exclaimed that individual, popping the palms of his hands as screens over his own.

“And pickle ’em,” added Jack, winking his unaccompanied organ of sight. “Pop

'em into jars, and cover 'em over with little bits o' bladder. That's the preserve for listeners," added he, while Mr. Wirkem rolled in his chair, like an uneasy barrel between two adverse inclined planes.

"Good, John, good!" said the President, as he came to a stop in his roar. "Wit," continued he, "should be like the flip of a whip—sharp and stingy—in the same fashion that a duck comes down upon a June bug."

"Sirs," said Mr. Wyper, "I know well enough what wit is. I sometimes have a sort of a touch of it myself; but then it always comes too late to be delivered. I've known many a good thing I could stump out; but never till about a week or ten days after the time it was wanted. My wit's a late pippin, more's the pity."

"And uncommon like a crab when fit to pick," rejoined John Hogg, refilling the bowl of his pipe.

“Now, silence,” said the President. “Dick Banbury will go on with his tale.”

“That is to say,” added Jack, in a whisper inaudible to all save Toddy, “he’ll unwind his dock.”

CHAPTER III.

THE BETROTHED CONTINUED.

On the following morning, (continued Banbury) Campbell and myself proceeded on horseback, at an early hour, to the farmhouse where we had left Miss de Grey, and had the satisfaction of learning that she had had a night of tranquil rest, and was so far recovered as to have been removed to her home about an hour previous to our arrival. We therefore determined to proceed thither, and make some personal inquiries concerning her.

After keeping a cross country road for about seven miles, we entered a tall rusty

iron gate, as directed, and wended our way up a wide gravel path, flanked by thick and widely-spreading chestnut-trees. On emerging from this avenue we came in sight of the Rookery, a fine gothic edifice which had defied the winter's blast and summer's sun for ages. A deep and dry fosse, upon whose slope many a garden-flower grew, surrounded the building—a remnant of feudal defence, recalling the jars and ravages of times long since passed away. In the centre of the house was a stone portal, patched with clinging moss, looking grim, and grey, and frowningly upon the approacher. A portcullis, rudely carved and crumbled, surmounted a massive black oak door, thickly studded with iron rivets; and a martin's nest rested on a convenient jutting ledge just above it. At each end of the long building were two thick buttresses, over which the ivy twined and spread, leaving here and there spaces of the old walls visible. Small but numerous windows, deeply set in stone

casements, flashed and sparkled in the light, and high chimneys, jagged and twisted in many a fantastic shape, reared themselves loftily on the sloping roof.

On the tall limbs of sturdy oaks and gigantic elms, spreading round and above the house, were countless nests of the cawing rook and swift-winged wood-pigeon. And all looked so old and so solitary, that we continued to gaze in silence for some time, previous to clanking the iron-headed lion, as a summons for our entry.

A servant answered it readily, and confirmed the statement of the morning, that his mistress was progressing favourably. We were about taking our departure upon the receipt of this intelligence, when Mr. Merton hurried from the house, and requested us to dismount. Nothing loath to do so, we gave our horses to a groom, and followed the Squire into a spacious hall, and from thence into a lofty and wide oak-panelled room.

“I am commissioned by Miss de Grey,” said he, addressing both of us, after we were seated, “to express her deep obligations for the great kindness and attention she met with at your hands yesterday; and am desired to add, to you, Captain Campbell,” said he, laughing, “that she will hold the future at *your* disposal, being satisfied that she is indebted to you for her life.”

“The assistance I was enabled to render her,” replied Campbell, “was purely accidental, and, therefore, no obligation is due to me.”

“She thinks otherwise,” returned the Squire. “However, I care not which way it is. In a short time we shall have her again in the field, with her merry laugh and halloo, and not a scratch on her pretty face, thank God!”

“I would submit to have a scar an inch deep carved in my own, rather than she should have the shadow of one,” returned Campbell.

“A gallant declaration,” said the Squire; “and one which I shall not fail to convey to the lady.”

“The surgeon gives hopes of a speedy convalescence?” observed I, inquiringly.

“Not only hopes,” replied the Squire, “but certainty. I have his plighted word that she shall be with me in the field again in less than a month. But come,” added he, “this is an old place, and, perchance, you would like a ramble through it. Not a niche but holds a ghost or goblin, according to the talk of the villagers, but, in my opinion, dusty cobwebs and antiquated spiders are the only inhabitants of them.”

Through long sweeping corridors we passed, leading into chambers long since deserted, and sounding as hollow under our tread as the vaulted tenements of the dead. As we entered one more extensive than the rest, which had evidently been a banquetting-hall, the Squire directed our attention to the barbed

point of an arrow, which was firmly wedged in the solid beam, stretching itself from one end of the roof to the other. A long spider's film, covered with grey dust, trailed from the broken weapon.

"When that twanged from the bow," observed the Squire, "it was intended for a warm throbbing heart, instead of that heart of oak. Three sieges," continued he, "has this old iron-sides withstood, according to the county records."

The walls of one room were curiously worked in tapestry, but so faded with age, that it was scarcely possible to discover the designs. One figure, however, in complete armour, wielding a ponderous battle-axe, with a red cross on his breast and shield, seemed to have been meant for Cœur de Lion in the wars of the crusaders.

"This is a dreary place for a young lady to live in," observed I. "What part of it does she occupy?"

“The western side,” replied the Squire, “and one which exhibits a very different appearance to this.”

Following our guide, who retraced his steps until he crossed the entrance-hall, we entered the rooms occupied by Miss de Grey, and which truly presented a very different and a very improved aspect. Choice flowers bloomed in every recess; rare birds sung and fluttered in cages suspended against the walls. A sleek fat spaniel rose from a rug on which he had been reclining, and waddled towards us with a friendly wag of his tail, looking luxury and ease personified.

“Well, Dash!” said the Squire, addressing the dog, “I remember the time when you were as nimble as a kitten; but now a turtle or a tortoise could beat you in a run of a yard.”

Perfect taste was displayed in every quarter of these apartments. Bright but antique armour, and splendid figures in bronze, were

placed in the most advantageous positions; pictures, statuary, and every thing were in keeping with the ancient structure of the place. The original narrow casements had been removed for glass-doors, which opened on a garden laid out in the Elizabethan style, and nothing had been neglected to give an air of elegance and comfort.

Expressing our admiration of the singular difference in the two opposite quarters of the building, the Squire said that we must pay it another visit when Miss de Grey recovered, for she was most anxious to make her personal acknowledgments for the attentions she had experienced.

“And,” continued he, “if you’re not more pleasantly engaged, come and dine with me to-day; otherwise I may die of a fit of the blues, for Mrs. Merton is head-nurse here, and I haven’t a soul at home to rub my hackles either up or down; which is the worst of all positions, I think.”

Consenting to his wish, he had his horse brought to the door, and, mounting our own, we turned their heads towards Boxvale, the Squire's hospitable seat.

As we were proceeding down a lane lined on either side by tall green bushes, we came suddenly at the turn of a corner upon a gipsy's camp. Within a few yards of one of the tents was a fire, over which a kettle steamed most fragrantly, being attended by a little ragged imp, who was industriously stirring the contents with a long wooden spoon.

"By St. Paul!" exclaimed the Squire, vexatiously, and sniffing the air like a hound on a doubtful scent, "that's hare-soup."

"Let me tell yer fortune, sir," said a brunette lass, crawling from under a few square yards of canvass, looking most persuasively with her large black eyes, peeping from between the folds of a gaily-coloured kerchief pinned round her head and face. "Let me

tell yer fortune, my dear sir," continued she, supplicatingly.

"That's hare-soup," repeated the Squire.

"You're born to be lucky, sir," added the gipsy. "You were born under a lucky star, sir."

"That's hare-soup," reiterated the Squire, getting off his horse, and striding towards the kettle, with deadly intent upon the savoury compound. In an instant the presiding deity of the pot dipped a hand recklessly into the scalding fluid, and, clutching the partly simmered form of a hare, rushed away with it, with little less fleetness than the animal itself might have exhibited previous to being the victim of a snare.

"Ye stoat of Satan!" hallooed the Squire, "that's one of my hares, I know. By St. Paul, I'll have the whole gang of ye on the treadmill before sunset!"

"Don't mind the bit of game, sir," returned the gipsy in a winning voice. "Have yer fortune told, kind gentlemen."

“Game!” screamed the young possessor of the smoking puss, standing at a distance of safety. “It’s no more game than you are. It’s a cuckoo,” continued he.

This sally caused the Squire to laugh heartily, and, shaking his whip at the nut-brown urchin, he cautioned him not to come within reach of the thong as long as he lived.

Again the gipsy importuned the Squire to have the future read from the mapped lines in his palm, and was joined by an old withered crone, who hobbled on a crutch-stick to his side.

“Out, out upon ye!” exclaimed the Squire, remounting. “There’s so little of the future left for me, that I’m not desirous of knowing a single incident connected with it.”

“Then you will, sir!” said the old hag to Campbell.

“Well!” returned he, throwing a half-crown to her, “let me hear of what hue is the mirror of my destiny.”

"Ye'll not believe the old woman," she replied, limping by the side of his horse, and peering into his face with her black, snake-like eyes. "That is," continued she, "ye'll laugh and jeer at her words, and yet they'll sink into your memory like pebbles in the stream."

"Now for a raven's croak," said the Squire. "Give her another piece, and she'll change it to as merry a tune as ever a tongue wagged to lie."

"No, she wouldn't, sir," replied the hag, shaking her head. "No, she wouldn't. Dame Werter will not lie for money or favour. She's too old for that. Her wants are few, and there's a supply for all."

"I wish hare-soup was not one part of it," rejoined the Squire. "Hang me, but some appear to be of the epicurean kind. But, come," continued he, "let us hear what ye have to say to my friend. Is he to be a favoured of Fortune?"

“Would that I dare say so!” returned the old woman, pretending to examine Campbell’s bared hand, but looking occasionally with earnestness into his face. “Would that I dare say so!” repeated she; “for one so good and gentle, the shafts winged to his heart by Fate ought to be tipped with sunshine. But, as the fairest flower is the first to be nipped by the sneaping frost, and as the brightest morning becomes the dullest day, so Destiny’s stricken victim is oft the noblest of the herd. Oh, sir!” continued she, with flushed cheek and flashing eye, and raising her hands supplicatingly, “could ye avoid one chance, the balance of your life, and all would be well.”

“And what is that?” inquired Campbell, interested against his inclination.

“*Never enter a roof over which the rook caws,*” replied the crone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BETROTHED CONTINUED.

It was an evening in glowing June. Long, dark shadows streaked upon the earth, and the fresh evening breeze, wafting the veiling mist from the cool waters, fanned each closing flower and blossom. The bat stole from the ivied wall, and whirled in the thickening shade, with the glee of a butterfly in the scorching noon. Rook challenged rook as each returned to his accustomed bough in the adjacent trees, and eyed with longing glance the humming beetle, as it wandered in the sinking light. The glowworm's pale lamp flickered faintly on the moss-bank, a beacon for the toad to

croak amorously to his mate. Every thing that revels in the glad sunshine had nestled to rest; those that shun the gay light were in the spring-tide of their merry-making.

Before an open casement, looking on to the flower-garden, sat Alice de Grey. There was an air of languor in her appearance as she reclined in a large antique-fashioned chair, with upturned eyes bent vacantly upon the fleecy clouds, shading but not concealing the moon's first flush of light. A spaniel was a candidate for the favours of his mistress, and kept rubbing his sleek ears against her hand, as it hung across an elbow of the chair; but all his endeavours to obtain notice were fruitless, and after trying his best for some time he abandoned the task, and, with a whine of discontent, crouched at her feet.

There was evidently a lurking cause of annoyance or sorrow rankling in her mind; for, as she looked upon the vapourish masses of the clouds, her eyes became moistened with

unshed tears, which trembled for a moment on the lids, and then trickled in large drops down her cheeks. No sob nor sound of any kind accompanied them. Silently they coursed each other from the fountains of grief, relieving perchance the pent-up passion or regret.

“Love me ! no, he’ll *never* love me !” she bitterly exclaimed ; and then, starting suddenly to her feet, she paced the room hurriedly, as if to drive the wringing thought from her mind.

“And yet,” she continued, “I have seen him look so impassioned, it is next to impossible that I should have been deceived. And yet deceived I must have been, or else why tamely see a rival press an apparently successful suit ? Great Heaven ! I cannot bear the reflection.”

At this moment the shadow of some one was thrown into the room, and immediately Campbell stood before the casement.

“I waited for some time,” began he, “in

the hope of hearing one of those exquisite scraps of songs so often trilled from this apartment. But all *my* hopes," continued he, mournfully, "are prismatic bubbles. They rise lightly and brightly, and, when within my seeming grasp, burst and become the type of all human pursuits—airy nothings."

"Sentimental, and, for aught I know to the contrary, philosophical, Captain Campbell," replied Miss de Grey. "However—" and then she began in a wild, thrilling voice —

Now, while love, and hope, and feeling,
Into every vein are stealing,

Say, what shall I with books?
Then, dearest lady, come with me,
I'll not neglect philosophy,
But read it in thy looks.

Evening primroses are blowing;
Come, and since no star is glowing,
I'll gaze within thine eye;
Among the smiles that sparkle there,
As bright as starlight, but more fair,
Is my astronomy.

We will walk long, silent hours,
Brushing dew from heavy flowers ;
And though you turn from me,
Low bowing with a bashful grace,
New creeds I'll gather from thy face
Of sweet philosophy.

"Sweet indeed !" returned Campbell ; "a study that might engross one's existence. Suppose that we attempt the rudiments ! You shall be my instructress. You will find an apt and willing pupil."

"More willing, perhaps, to be taught than I to teach," replied Alice.

"This evening is very fine," added Miss de Grey, "and I was half-resolved to stroll for an hour in the pale moon's light, before your arrival."

"Pray let that arrival add the wanting moiety," returned Campbell. "There is nothing more charming than a walk at this hour with those we——"

He would have added "love;" but the

word, although it rose from his heart, died upon his lips. This was not lost upon Miss de Grey; and, going from the room to procure a shawl, she stood for some time in deep meditation previous to again joining Campbell. There was a calm determination in her features; and although her nether lip was keenly pressed between her teeth, and her brow was slightly knit, she cheerfully took the proffered arm of her companion, as he led her into the adjacent garden.

Beautifully bright the moon was sailing through the blue heavens, darting her rays through the green tree-tops, making the face of nature flash in her brilliancy; and the gentle sounds which smote the ear were so soft and low, that Love seemed breathing and whispering to every closing flower around.

"Pardon me, Miss de Grey," said Campbell, after a few awkward and ineffectual attempts to drop the words from the lips on

which they seemed to hang; "but I cannot longer deny to my affection the mingled bliss and torture of this moment. From the first time of my beholding you, I have felt a passion for you pure as was ever felt by man for woman. Forgive me if these words should be displeasing," continued he, and his voice trembled as he spoke. "But they shall be the last ever addressed to you by me, unless you are pleased to admit—what, I confess, I have very little hopes of—a respectful pressure of my suit in future."

A silence of some seconds ensued, during which Alice was paler than a lily which drooped its head close by. At length she said in a low, half-suppressed tone—

"I was not insensible, Captain Campbell, that—I mean—that is to say—forgive me, sir, if circumstances conspire to agitate me a little, and cause me to doubt what I ought to reply. I wish to say what is becoming, and

to retain your respect;" and the lady trembled as she said it—"but—"

"My respect was never profounder than at this moment, Miss de Grey," returned Campbell, "even though I am presumptuous enough to entertain a hope that you will not think it disrespectful on my part if I express a warmer feeling. Ah!" said he, "if you knew the depth of that emotion which I cannot express! the tenderness and respectfulness of heart which, at this moment, falter on my tongue! May I dare hope that you meant to say any thing more kind to me than a common expression of politeness? If so, I will dare to say that the sweet truth of your nature need not fear to disclose itself."

"Listen to me, Captain Campbell!" said Miss de Grey. "From the secluded life I have led, the world and its ways are little known to me. Perchance, the very limited intercourse I have had may have caused me, like the recluse in his cell, to be less inclined

to mingle with the throng the more I have kept aloof from it. Be this, however, as it may, I am happy, very happy in the lonely life I lead, and should feel as much reluctance in quitting it, as I should feel unqualified for the artificial usages of society. The wild bird," continued she smiling, "seldom sings when caged ; and, of all those that soar the highest, and wing their flight the longest, not one would pine more for a broken pinion than I should for my solitary home, if bereft of it. No, no, no—I am not suited to become your wife."

"Say not so," replied Campbell, passionately, "say not so. There is no wish of yours but must be mine. I care little—nothing for the society to which you allude. All—every thing I can and will resign for your inestimable self. Conditions there can be none."

"An unconditional promise sounds somewhat rash," observed Alice.

“There are exceptions to the most stringent rules,” rejoined Campbell, “and here is one. What is there I should not deem a happiness to do, or not to do, so that a wish or inclination of yours might be satisfied or anticipated?”

“There then,” added Miss de Grey, giving her hand to Campbell, and colouring deeply as she spoke, but the shadow of night hid the maiden blush; “I will not refuse your suit, although, God help me!—” and a sigh burst from her bosom, sounding but little of joy or of love, as she was caught in his arms, and the first long, clinging kiss of unalloyed fondness was pressed upon her lips.

At this moment the leaves of a neighbouring laurel-bush rustled loudly, which caused them both to start, and upon turning to ascertain the cause, for a second, a brief second, the shade of a third person was cast near their own. Campbell, perceiving it in an instant, sprung into the bush, when out flapped a grey

owl with an unearthly screech, making the welkin ring with its horrid scream.

“Heaven protect us!” exclaimed Alice, terrified at the unexpected visiter.

“I certainly saw the shadow of some one besides those of ourselves,” said Campbell, hastily returning to the side of Miss de Grey. “Some eavesdropper must have been near us; but I cannot see anybody.”

Scarcely were the words spoken when a voice, which sounded familiar to Campbell’s ear, and seemed like that of the old crone, Dame Werter, was heard singing the following lines :

Hark ! hark to the note of the owl as he sings
In the moss-grown turret hard by ;
To the bat and the toad he a love-tale brings,
Seal’d with sorrowful destiny.

But the old grey owl is the bird for me,
For he tells of sorrows to come ;
His voice is my heart’s loved mimstrelsy,
As it joins in the night-wind’s moan.

Hark ! hark to the note of the owl as he sings
In the moss-grown turret hard by ;
To the bat and the toad he a love-tale brings,
Seal'd with sorrowful destiny.

The last words died away in the distance, but still Alice turned her ear towards the quarter from whence they came.

"It was one of the gipsies encamped close by," observed Campbell.

"I dislike the portent of the lines," said Alice.

"Surely you're not superstitious?" replied Campbell, placing his arm tenderly round her waist, and pressing her to his side.

"I scarcely know what it may be called," rejoined Alice, trembling, "but often have I felt a presentiment of evil, and I never experienced it more palpably than to-night."

"It is merely nervousness, consequent on your late illness," returned Campbell, "increased, perchance, by the old beldame's song."

“Perhaps so,” said Alice. “But, come, ’tis getting late, and your journey to Canterbury is somewhat long. Let us return to the house.”

CHAPTER V.

THE BETROTHED CONTINUED.

It is now necessary that I should speak of myself, (continued the narrator,) and refer to some past occurrences which, although trifling in themselves, are indispensable joints of my narrative.

Soon after Miss de Grey's recovery, which took place within a month of her receiving the injury, Campbell and myself became constant visitors at the Rookery, and, to speak the truth, we appeared to be far from unwelcome ones. Occasionally we used to meet the Squire and his wife there, but no one else; and thus a strong intimacy arose between us.

Immediately that Campbell had an opportunity, he undisguisedly evinced the passion which he had entertained from the first moment of seeing the beautiful girl whose life he had been chiefly instrumental in saving. And although she sometimes received his attentions with great favour, there was a fickleness of manner about her which continually left him between doubt and hope.

From a cause hardly to be explained, and yet not difficult to be conceived, this subject of all-engrossing interest to himself was never mentioned to me, either directly or indirectly, although the friendship existing between us became daily stronger than ever. But, suspecting, which was the case, that he had in myself a rival in feeling, although not so expressed by word, and I hoped not by look or gesture, Alice was tacitly a subject never alluded to by either of us.

It may appear strange that anything like a good understanding, or even common civility,

could exist between two men thus situated : but so it was ; and in the belief that my friend was the favoured one, and in every way the most eligible, I yielded to his superior claims, without the faintest struggle for precedence. More than once, indeed, I was staggered with an expression from the lady's sparkling eyes, as they met my own ; but not dreaming for a moment that I found an answering spirit within them, the sensation was but like the fleeting sound of some thrilling cord unexpectedly touched.

To say that I did not envy Campbell would be to declare myself more immaculate than every other man could be, placed in such circumstances ; but to declare that I threw in his way every facility in my power, to ensure him speedy success, and that he was the constant theme of my sincerest commendation, is to say no more than is strictly in accordance with the truth. The eulogy sounds but ill from me, but I hesitate not to assert, that,

deeming my own feelings totally disregarded by the object of their solicitude, I was sufficiently generous to assist my friend in succeeding to win the prize he so ardently longed to call his own. Little progress, however, seemed to be made; for no sooner were his attentions favourably received, than the next day, perhaps the next hour, produced as opposite a change.

The Squire, who took as much interest in the proceedings as if he had been her parent, was a decided advocate to our cause, for such I may call it, and rated Alice soundly for her "waywardness and fickleness," as he called her conduct. "By St. Paul!" he would say, "were I whipped off thus, when just upon the brush, I'd skulk to kennel and hunt no more."

So things went on for some two months, when, without my knowledge, Campbell determined to decide the matter, on the evening and in the way I have just described to you. The result you are acquainted with.

The succeeding morning I was startled, at sunrise, by Campbell rushing into my bedroom, in a state of great trepidation, holding an unfolded letter in his hand.

“Banbury,” said he, “I’ve this moment had a special messenger from the Isle of Wight, bearing this unwelcome letter to me,” and a tear dropped as he spoke; “the most so,” continued he, “that I ever received in the course of my life. My mother, whom you know resides there, is at the point of death, and desires instantly to see me. Will you—as I shall have made my arrangements for departing within a quarter of an hour—proceed early to the Rookery, and say, as I promised to be there before noon, the cause of my unavoidable absence? My return must, of course, depend upon circumstances; but you may also add that I shall take the earliest opportunity of fulfilling the appointment, and that a letter will herald the keeping of it.”

Expressing my regret at the cause of his hasty departure, and exchanging friendly grasps of the hands, with a promise to obey his instructions, we parted.

From the time I undertook to convey Campbell's message to the Rookery, I felt an irresistible inclination to bend my steps there almost daily. The attraction was like the needle to the magnet, a force beyond opposition. Imperceptibly our hearts became entwined and our sympathies folded within each other, without even the knowledge of either. Of the most ardent temperament, equally ignorant and careless of the conventional rules of society, Alice portrayed, at length, in every look and gesture, the pleasure she experienced in my undivided society. Early in the morning I met her in the fields, brushing the dew from daisy-cups; and it was often not till the nightingale had piped on the thorn that we separated.

Thus weeks flew past without my hearing

a word from Campbell, and in the enjoyment of my daily intercourse with Alice I had almost forgotten him, or, if remembered, it was only as one I had now entirely supplanted. Neither did I reproach myself with the cause or the effect. Indeed, I was too devoted to care, perhaps, by what means I had won the affections of Miss de Grey; but at the same time I was conscious of not using any treacherous ones, or other than I was fully entitled to employ. Ignorant of the terms on which Campbell parted from Alice, I considered that he never would have been accepted, and had it not been "that many a heart is caught in the rebound," when her pride was wounded by my seeming cold indifference, his suit, when pressed, would have been at once rejected.

Thus matters stood when a morning's post brought intelligence of Campbell's intended return on the following day. Then, and not till then, I determined to propose in form

for the hand of Miss de Grey; for, although my advances had been met with too decided favour to admit of any doubt as to the result, I had not yet spoken of that which was nearest and dearest to my heart. With the intention of putting this resolution in force, I mounted my horse, and proceeded to the Rookery.

It was a sultry evening, late in August. The distant rumble of thunder was now and then heard, and the black, heavy masses of clouds rolling heavily from the west, tinged with the purple light of the sinking sun, betokened a coming storm. Hurrying forward, I just managed to gain the portal of the house as the tempest burst in all its gathered violence. Alice, expecting me, was at the entrance; and, as she took my proffered arm, to conduct her within, a crash of heaven's artillery roared above our heads, and reverberated from hill to hill, miles distant. Flash after flash of the forked lightning succeeded,

and then a deluge of water spouted on the earth, bubbling and hissing as it fell. Roll after roll of the warring elements succeeded, and the heavy clouds floated slowly on, spouting forth their overcharged contents.

“ ’Tis a dreadful storm,” observed Alice.

“ Yes,” replied I, “ but from its violence it cannot last.”

“ It appears that extremes can never last in any thing,” rejoined Alice.

“ Such seems to be one of Nature’s immutable decrees,” returned I.

“ I hope not—sincerely hope not,” said Alice, excitement kindling fire in her eyes. “ I would not think so for ages of certain happiness hereafter.”

“ And why not ?” I inquired.

“ Because,” she added, “ the thought would insure me the rack now ; a refinement of torture that causes pain even to contemplate.”

“ And yet,” said I, “ we should never fear to think of what *must* be.”

“There I differ with you,” replied Alice. “It seems to me but poor philosophy to think of, and thereby anticipate, many disagreeable and inevitable certainties. For instance: decrepid age, infirmities, or premature death—consequences attendant upon life; but ’twould be far from agreeable to dwell upon these closing scenes of our drama, and foretaste their bitterness previous to the allotted period.”

“We are taught otherwise,” rejoined I; “and are bid, by thinking of them, to prepare against their visitation.”

“And our stern teachers, with their proselytes, may enjoy the study; but it shall be none of mine,” returned Alice. “’Tis sufficient occupation for me to render the present as pleasurable as possible: the past is gone, and the future is a mystery none can solve.”

“But we should be like mariners at sea,” continued I, “ignorant of latitude or longitude, and without helm or compass, were it

not that experience of the past guides us to the future. And, in like manner, when sailing before the wind buoyantly and joyously, we should strike upon some hidden rock or quicksand, and, when least expecting it, become a hopeless wreck."

"I'll not deny but that you have the best of the argument," she returned. "But still I might be able to puzzle you. However," continued she, "as I might perchance suffer in your estimation by confessing my peculiar ideas concerning this sublunary existence, we'll permit the subject to drop now, and for ever."

The storm by this time had abated. The last rays of the setting sun shot from the verge of a frowning cloud, and streamed gladly on the saturated ground. The air, stilled from the songs of birds while the tempest raged, was now filled by them. The cricket chirped merrily from his grassy bed, and the mavis whistled in concert. Creeping

things crawled from their flooded homes, and their enemies took advantage of their migration. The rooks wheeled and stooped from the sheltering trees, and traversed the ground with acute eye and nimble step, in pursuit of the wandering tribes. Loaded bees issued from the foxglove's secret depths, and humming their joy at its secure protection, buzzed to their thrifty store.

On the border of the lawn, to the right of the Rookery, was a grove of thick Scotch firs. So dense were they, that hours of continued rain would scarcely penetrate to the serpentine walk which wound for half a mile between them. Thither, as had been our wont for some time, we proceeded to take our evening walk. Quantities of game were reared here, and suffered to remain undisturbed by visits from the sportsman; and as we slowly took our way, the pheasant stretched his long neck from the shady covert, and peering at his disturbers, shook his gay

plumage when we passed, and again settled himself to rest. Occasionally the leaves rustled as some wild denizen of the fields and the woods hurried away from our dreaded presence, and the whir-r of the pigeon's wing saluted our ears as the timid bird was awakened by our footfall.

At the end of this path was a rude, uncultivated bower, formed of wild hops clinging to the boughs and stems of the overhanging trees. The vines had been cleared in the centre of one thick clump, and a seat, roughly hewn from the solid trunk of an oak, was placed within it.

Upon this we rested, and after a silence of some duration, I told the tale she had read before in the silent language of the heart. Long and passionately did I plead my cause; never were words to me so apt before. At length I paused, without much fear, to learn my doom. Eagerly I gazed into her eyes, and as they were lit by a moon's ray, stealing

between the leaves, I saw the tear of joy and of love floating in them. In a moment I snatched her to my breast, and the reciprocated affection and consent were murmured in kisses upon my lips.

All nature was hushed. The wind toyed with the leaf so softly that it scarcely flapped in his gentle breath, and every thing seemed calm and at peace.

The hour, the place, the circumstances—every thing conspired to render the temptation which beset us too strong for human weakness to withstand.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BETROTHED CONTINUED.

The next day Campbell returned; and although I felt that the communication I determined to make without loss of time would give him poignant anguish, I was totally unprepared for the expression of intense and indescribable horror and surprise which was displayed in his features when I informed him of my becoming his successful rival. He looked at me as if in doubt of my sanity, or the correctness of his own senses. Silently he continued to gaze, while all the colour forsook his cheek, and his lips became pale and ashy.

“ Yes,” he at length muttered, “ yes, it seems and sounds *impossible* ; but ’tis true. You could not—no, your tongue would refuse to utter an untruth. I’ve heard of such things before,” continued he bitterly. “ But, my God, my God ! they’re monstrous and incredible.”

“ Calm yourself,” replied I. “ Although I can feel for your disappointment, I don’t think there is sufficient cause for the astonishment and anger you express. Miss de Grey was not affianced to you ; and, if it is any consolation, I may say, never would have been.”

“ Not affianced !” exclaimed Campbell. “ Not affianced !” and his amazement increased tenfold.

“ No,” rejoined I, “ and I repeat, never would have been.”

“ Give me your hand,” returned he, holding out his own. “ I wronged you in thought. Forgive me. You did not *know* then ——

but it matters not at this moment:" and breaking off thus suddenly, he hurriedly paced the room, clasping his hands, and looking the very picture of despair.

After a short time he became more composed, but still was greatly excited, and continued to exclaim against the cruelty and heartlessness of women in general. At length he said—

"I've a request to make, and although it may appear unreasonable, and one decidedly I have no right to make, still I hope you will grant it to me."

"It is granted," replied I, "before being made."

"Then go not to the Rookery to-day," returned he, "but wait until I've seen her once again. I need scarcely say it will be the last visit that I shall pay."

"As you please," added I. "But saying I should be there in the course of the day, I beg that you will explain the cause of my absence."

"I will," said he. "Accept my thanks for your abstinence from so much pleasure," continued he, smiling sarcastically, and leaving the room.

I almost repented of having complied with Campbell's request, and, after he quitted me, began to think that I had acted unwisely in permitting him to seek an interview with Alice alone at such a moment. However, as I had done so, I of course did not attempt to recall it. His look as he departed struck me as being full of turbulent passion, and his previous portrayal of it all tended to increase my uneasiness at his going.

And here I will pause in my narrative to confess that which I believe the majority of men entertain in like circumstances, although few perhaps would acknowledge it. Since the scene of last evening in the fir-grove, Alice had become to me an altered being. The flower was bruised and sullied, and no longer offered its former attractions. I thought of

her as of one that I *must* make my wife ; not as of one that I wished to make so, if honour did not sternly so decree. Love had vanished, and *duty* now usurped his post. To save her reputation and my own, I never thought of doing other than performing my plighted word ; but, had there been a choice, I would have retracted it with more ecstasy than I had pledged it.

Notwithstanding, however, this revulsion of feeling, I became more disturbed in mind as the hours flew past without Campbell's returning. At length, I could not restrain the inclination of seeking him, conjuring up in my imagination a multitude of horrors, crowding upon each other like coloured forms in the kaleidoscope. But, just as I was issuing from my room, I heard his step approaching. Never shall I forget the impression his appearance made upon me. He reeled towards me like one intoxicated, with a face so distorted, that it was scarcely possible to trace a single fea-

ture. His lower jaw dropped from the other, as in a corpse, and his eyes had that dull, leaden look which shewed the fire of life was nearly extinguished. Not a tinge of blood was in his cheeks, and he seemed a dead though breathing man.

"Gracious heaven!" I exclaimed, "what is the matter? are you ill?"

"Very—I am *very* ill," he replied.

In a moment I assisted him to a couch, and was about hurrying away for assistance, when he motioned me to stay.

"Do not leave me," he whispered—"do not leave me; I have something to say to you, and but a short time left to say it in."

"Let me at least send for medical aid," I rejoined.

He smiled faintly, and said, "I'm not in want of it. Listen: I have seen her, and have learned that which I believed before—that you did not wrong me intentionally. But what will you think, when I tell you that she was be-

trothed to me by her own consent, freely given, as she now is to you?"

"What!" exclaimed I, astonishment thrilling through my frame, "*betrothed to you?*"

"Ay, solemnly betrothed to me!" returned he, in a tone not to be doubted, "so help me Heaven!"

In broken sentences, and occasionally gasping for breath, Campbell then recounted to me the particulars of his last meeting with Alice, and that during his absence he had sent several letters to her; but, with the exception of the first, he had received no answers: and, although this neglect occasioned some surprise, he supposed indisposition, or some such cause, had prevented the replies to his communications.

"But," continued he, "I now know too well the reason, and may God forgive her broken vow, as I do!"

"If I had been acquainted with this," returned I, "believe me, Campbell, neither for her nor for any woman breathing would I have

been the instrument of injury to a friend, or the cause of a solemn plighted word being disregarded, as though 'twas less material than the air which gave it birth. I tremble to think of it."

"From my soul, I believe you," replied he. "But think no more of it. That which is one man's loss is another's gain. Take her—and may Heaven bless ye both! Banbury," continued he, raising himself on his elbow, and looking earnestly into my face, "it is a dying man's blessing, and one which emanates from a heart bearing no hatred nor malice towards any living creature."

"Dying!" repeated I. "Surely it is but the temporary effects of excitement and distress of mind?"

"Ah, my friend!" added he, sorrowfully, and an expression of pain convulsed his features, "both mind and body are poisoned."

"What!" I exclaimed, "*poisoned!*" and I clutched a bellrope.

“Hush, hush, Banbury,” he returned, “be not alarmed on my account. Bring no one here, for Heaven’s sake !”

“Say,” added I, “are you——”

“*A suicide !*” replied he, “certain and irremediable.”

I heard no more. As quick as thought, with terror to urge me, I flew for assistance. In a few brief moments, a crowd of friends and attendants rushed into the apartment ; and, as I returned, I saw in the middle of the throng a surgeon on his knees, pressing a hand upon Campbell’s heart. By his side were various instruments, and his fingers held a vial marked “deadly poison.”

“’Tis useless,” said he, rising, “the quantity would have killed a dozen men.”

“And is he dead ?” inquired I, pressing forward.

“Quite, sir,” was the reply ; and I felt my heart withered by it.

There he lay, a few hours before in the ex-

uberance of youth, strength, and manhood, now a scorched and unsightly mass. His limbs were drawn up and cramped in the agonies of death, and his face told how hard the struggle had been in the forcible separation between soul and body.

With surprise, horror, and the deepest sorrow, I was followed from the apartment by our mutual friends; and all I remember afterwards on this dreadful night was finding myself waking as if from a deep sleep, and the blood trickling from an opened vein in my arm.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BETROTHED CONTINUED.

Confused, as if some terrible dream had been racking my brain through the long and tedious night, I woke early the following morning weak and feverish. I can scarcely describe my feelings faithfully, as the incidents of the preceding day flashed with all their cruel truth on my memory. I began to suspect that Alice might be but the slave of passion, and a thousand revolting images reared themselves in my mind. With distrust, sorrow, anger, and a mingling of sensations impossible for words to represent, but leading a most disordered frame of mind, I proceeded to the Rookery.

Alice, in anticipation of my visit, was sauntering in the avenue some distance from the house, and, seeing my approach, hastened towards me. Never did she look more beautiful. Her long, black tresses were sweeping down her shoulders as carelessly and unconfined as the tendrils of some wild vine. Her slight but beautifully-moulded figure was robed in a simple, white morning-dress, and round her waist was tied a string of large jet beads, which hung to the ground. On the inside of a close cottage bonnet a fresh-picked rose was placed, but it would be difficult to say which looked the freshest, the flower or the cheek on which it rested.

With a light step she bounded to my side ; and, as she came, a ringing laugh of joy and of love burst from her lips as my welcome. But when she arrived close to me, and saw my pale and haggard face, the colour forsook her cheek, like transient breath from a mirror. Mutely she gazed at me as I dismounted from my horse,

and, staggering to a neighbouring bench, almost fell as I reached it.

"Tell me," she said, clinging to me, and with deep emotion, "are you ill? has any thing happened? Speak, in the name of Heaven!"

"Oh, Alice!" I exclaimed, unable to conceal my mental anguish an instant longer, "why did you conceal from me the—the——" I could say no more. My gorge rose, and threatened to choke me with grief.

"I know what you would say," she returned; "but upbraid me not. *He* was here yesterday, and performed that part to perfection."

"But surely you must have thought and known," continued I, "how wrong, how unjustifiable it was for you to admit of my advances; and then not to acquaint me with the secret, but let it reveal itself in all its bare reality. Indeed, Alice, there is too much cause to upbraid you for me to pass it over in silence."

“ If the truth be no justification,” replied she, “ I’ll have no other advocate. Give me your patience for a few brief moments. From the hour I first saw you, the germs of as true and warm affection were planted in my bosom as ever sprung from the heart of woman. Your apparent want of sympathy and coldness of conduct were constant sources of torment to me, and my pride was daily and hourly wounded by the general indifference of your demeanour. I confess admitting occasionally of Captain Campbell’s addresses, solely in the hope of creating a feeling in you which I trusted might be raised from the spirit of rivalry. In this I was disappointed. Nothing would fan the spark I so longed to see reared into a flame, and at length, tired with the ceaseless attentions of the one, and indignant at the want of them from the other, I, in a moment of mortification, reluctantly permitted my tongue to consent to that which my heart denied. Soon

after this I discovered my error; and God is my witness how I at once rejoiced and sorrowed at the discovery!—rejoiced for the hope of the consummation of my heart's only desire, and sorrowed for the hasty barrier I had raised against the possession of it. Still this was but a feather in the scale weighed against the attainment of my wish, and I determined to defy all censure, all reproach, to become your own. In the conviction that your stern sense of duty, and observance of the conventional, automaton rules of society would at once decide your resolution in the event of learning my engagement with your friend, I was resolved, if possible, not to let you know it until——”

She paused and hesitated to proceed.

“Until no choice was left me, you would say,” returned I.

“Until you were equally disposed to set aside such a cold, calculating code,” added

she, regarding me with a lowering brow and fiery glance.

"Then learn," replied I, "that I am as much disposed now to obey the edict to which you refer as I should have been in the first instance, had I known what I now do. You have deceived me, you have deceived yourself, and one who is now oblivious of your wrong and cruelty. Yes, Alice," continued I, "he who loved you as well as I, and who was far more worthy of a pure requital, is now a corpse, a suicide!"

"Heaven have mercy upon me!" she ejaculated. "Heaven have mercy upon me!" and, falling on her knees, she clasped her hands and poured forth a prayer in an agony of supplication for forgiveness.

I watched her with little less emotion; and as I heard the choking sobs heaving from her bosom, and saw the tears streaming down her cheeks, I forgot the wrong, and saw only the penitent.

“ Evil recoils upon itself,” she murmured as I proceeded to raise her ; but as my hand was extended, and ere it touched her, she sprung to her feet, and retreating from me said, “ It shall never touch me more. No !” and throwing her hands wildly out, she uttered a vow, so solemn and irrevocable, that I was silenced by its awful affirmation, never to become my wife.

“ Your words were,” she said, bitterly, while her eyes glared with passion like an infuriated tigress, “ ‘ *That I am as much disposed now to obey the edict to which you refer, as I should have been in the first instance had I known what I now do !*’ ” Then, in the name of Heaven, obey it !” she exclaimed. “ I’ll be no obstacle to its fulfilment.”

I endeavoured to soothe the ungovernable passion which possessed her, but my words fell like drops of water into a sea of fire.

“ Away,” she said. “ Be gone ; and let us never see each other more.”

“ Let me entreat,” said I.

“ Not if angels knelt and backed the petition with their tears,” interrupted she ; “ not if torments everlasting were threatened, thicker than the gentle drops of rain from heaven !”

“ And must we thus really part ?” I asked.

“ Ay, and for ever,” she replied deliberately ; “ for ever.”

“ Can you make no allowance for my hasty observation ?” said I. “ Think of my deep, deep sorrow for my friend’s lamentable fate ?”

“ Is it possible that I should forget it for one single moment of my future life ?” rejoined she, pressing her hands upon her forehead. “ Is it not for ever branded here, stamped with torture,” added she between her clenched teeth, “ dissolving all superficial thought, and leaving nothing but the

bared truth—a hideous skeleton. Yes,” continued she, “I see in myself a guilty wretch, and in you——” — she paused, and coming near me, shook her head reproachfully, less in anger than in sorrow—“in you *a satiated lover.*”

The words found an echo in my heart. I could make no reply. Instead of the accuser, I felt the accused.

“Farewell!” she added, “farewell! and as we were, so let us henceforth be—strangers.”

I sprung forward to catch her in my embrace, impelled by uncontrollable impulse.

“No, no, no! remember,” said she, pointing to the clear, cloudless sky, “I have that registered there, which truth shall seal. Once more, farewell!” and turning, she left me, with one long, sad look.

The narrator stopped, and seemed to have arrived at the conclusion of his tale; but more than one of his hearers continued to

offer their attention as if their curiosity remained unsatisfied.

“ And pray, Dick,” at length said Mr. Wirkem, cramming some tobacco into his pipe with an unusually fidgety manner, “ may I ask what became o’ the poor young creetur?”

“ Years and years flew past,” replied Banbury, “ without my hearing any thing of her; for soon after the sad occurrence related to you, I sold my commission, and sought a forgetfulness of it in other and distant lands, where I resided amid extravagant and dissolute scenes for a long period. Upon my return, as most of ye here know, I mounted the box of the Era, more for my amusement than for my profit. Soon after my being installed a knight of the ribands, I learned one day, from a passenger on the box, that there was a singular woman always hovering about the Court of Chancery, attired in deep mourning, and accompanied by a young and evidently idiotic boy. She sometimes,” said my in-

formant, "interrupts the court by a short appeal for justice for some wrong, real or imaginary, but a word quiets her, and no one takes further notice of it. Sometimes, indeed, persons curious to know the reason of her constant attendance have interrogated her, but she always turns away, and declines to answer.

"This intelligence deeply interested me, and the following day I went to see if my suspicions would be confirmed. Scarcely had I entered the hall when my eye caught the form I was seeking. And there she stood, twining her long and wasted fingers within those of a sickly-looking child, whose constant unmeaning smile and vacant stare told the brain's disease. She was so changed that I even hesitated to believe it was once the young, the gay, the beautiful Alice de Grey. But it was too true. There she was, the demented mother of an idiot child, old,

wrinkled, and withered—the wreck of passion and the ruin of beauty.

“ I turned away horror-stricken, and from that hour to this I have sought to know nothing more of the fate of Alice de Grey.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISCUSSION.

“Poor thing, poor thing!” ejaculated Mr. Wirkem, his fine stout cheeks becoming drawn to something like a performer’s on the flute, and, shaking his head sorrowfully, he applied a light to his fresh charge of tobacco, and puffed away in silence.

“I tell ye what it is, sirs,” observed Melancholy Joey, “I should have relished that dodge uncommonly, if there’d been a tip-top funeral at the end on it. Howsomever, it cut out blessed fat in the whole.”

“You male cock-roach!” returned one-eyed Jack. “You’re fonder o’ misery than most folks are o’ holiday makin.”

“John,” returned Mr. Wyper, deliberately,

"every man to his taste. Some individooals hold different opinions to other individooals. We're babbies of circumstances, and, in my judgment, have as little choice of our feelins which drives the wan of our doins, as havin the pick o' the buzzum which gives us suck."

"And don't we have a pick o' the boozum?" inquired Jack, pointing to the array of bottles on the table. "Whisky, rum, gin, hollands, and brandy," continued he, admiringly. "I should like to know what you would have more, old growler!"

"A pint of half-an-half, I expect," added Toddy, grinning. "Half o' precious grumps, filled up o' doldrums. I never saw a feller," continued he, "put me so much in mind of a blessed pelican."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack. "He *does* look like a bless-ed pelican, or an old sea-horse, which I don't know, seein as how I never see'd either of the gen'l'men."

"Mr. Toddy," observed Melancholy Joey,

"you're a stranger to me, sir, and, bein one, I'll thank you to behave as sich. Personalities is—is—is," added he, hesitatingly, "personalities."

"No, they isn't," replied Toddy, confidently, and looking at the propounder of the axiom with stern defiance, as if courting another "friendly mill." "And if they was," continued he, "wot's the odds!"

"A considerable deal, sir," replied Mr. Wyper, and his nose became more than ordinarily red with excitement. "A considerable deal," repeated he, "as any man that knows his alphabet would say, without so much as countin his fingers."

"Go it, my spicy bantams!" shouted Jack. "Both cocks'll come to the scratch, I know."

This observation attracted the President's attention, and at length roused him from his reverie.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said he, authoritatively, "I must have no jarring here. Re-

member, this is a society of friends, although we're not exactly quakers," and a purple hue spread itself over his features, like the sun breaking through the veiling mist of early morn. "Good fellowship and good breeding," added he, "are the best match pair in Christendom."

"No doubt of it, Mr. Wirkem, sir," replied John Hogg, suddenly veering from his point, and adding, in a manner and tone that a courtier might imitate for its flattery, "Ah! if some folks was to do as *you* do, sir, then other folks wouldn't go for to do as they do do."

The President appeared somewhat puzzled at the repetition of the verb, but replied, "In that case he supposed they would not. But, come," continued he, "the night wanes apace, and we're a cup too low. Fill your glasses high, my boys, and drain them to a toast I'll give ye."

"We certainly are goin a shade too close

to the ground," returned the Vice-president, obeying the order. "Now, Dick, what is it to be, eh?"

"Are ye all charged?" inquired Mr. Wirkem, surveying the company.

"All, all," replied several voices.

"Then, here's to maids, wives, and widows. May the first never be prudes, the second shrews, and the third and last old screws!"

"That wish would find an echo," replied Jacob Plywel, after the sentiment had met with its due honours, "in many a man's mind. Lor, Dick!" continued he, "when I've been driving a full load o' bits o' muslin, and seen 'em all looking so full o' smiles, youth, and beauty, talking and laughing, and making a fellow's eyes water to look at such pretty dears, I've wondered where the devil all the old women come from. Those young, round, plump pippins, I've thought to myself, can never turn into rough, ill-shaped, sour-looking crabs we so often see."

Mr. Wirkem drew himself up in his chair, and, placing his pipe slowly upon the table, appeared about to deliver some sage creation of his brain, which was gradually working itself into a state of parturition.

“Have you ever seen a caterpillar, Jacob?” at length said he, with a dignity of deportment which the philosophical nature of the query demanded.

“Yes, Dick Wirkem, I have seen a great many on cabbages,” replied Jacob.

“Very good,” rejoined the President. “Then every one of those pulpy grubs was once a gay winged summer fly; a thing pretty to look at, dancing in the sunshine from fruit to flower, and making little children and truant schoolboys chase it for its beauty.”

“I see what you’re coming at,” observed Jacob.

“To be sure you do, now I’ve told ye,” rejoined Mr. Wirkem. “Time and the seasons change all things, from a butterfly to a wo-

man," continued he. "That which is the most beautiful not unfrequently becomes the most unsightly. And it is not more surprising that a young, slim, cherry-cheeked lass" (and the old coachman smiled as the picture was conjured in his imagination) "should turn by age into a meagre, lank-jawed, toothless, blear-eyed, bare-poled, yellow-tanned, mouldy member of the feminine gender, than it is for a beautiful winged insect to become a crawling slimy grub."

"True, very true," observed Bill Johnson.

"Hear, hear, hear," cried Jacob Plywel.

"Change and change for ever, gentlemen," resumed the President, "is one of Nature's principal stages on the road of life. She is never content even to let her own face alone, but, like a fickle woman, no sooner is it tricked out comely in one way, than she alters the fashion, and tries another. Thus, from herself to the meanest link that forms a part and parcel of the mighty whole, variation,

either from imperfection to completeness, or from completeness to decay, is continually, although imperceptibly, on the move."

"Bray-vo!" shouted Tom Short. "What a leader you'd make in parliament, Dick Wirkem! I should like just to hear you tackle one o' those great guns, there," continued he, with admiration. "How you'd smoke!"

"I think I see him now," observed John Hogg, reflectively, and looking at the ceiling immediately over his head, as if he had a visionary glimpse of his patron brow-beating the speaker. "I think I see him now," repeated he, "a-trottin out his donkey."

"I don't like any kind o' drag to pass me, and never did," said Toddy. "Now, sir, you're lingo," continued he, addressing the President, "was a shave too fine for my upper stories; that is to say, just the last mouthful or so."

"I meant simply this," replied Mr. Wirkem,

proud at being called upon to explain his refined phraseology — “every thing and every one is either going up hill or down, at all times and at all seasons.”

“Thank’e, sir,” replied Toddy; and, turning to one-eyed Jack, observed, “I don’t like to swallow a ball, without knowing what it’s made of.”

Jack nodded an assent, and pointed with his thumb to the President, who had rapped for silence and attention.

“Now, Banbury,” said Mr. Wirkem, “it’s your turn; make your choice.”

“There’s no rule that because a member has spun one yarn, he is exempted from spinning another, I believe,” said Banbury.

“Certainly not,” replied the President. “If called upon, he must obey.”

“Then I shall exercise my right,” rejoined Banbury, “by calling upon you, Dick Wirkem.”

“Capital, capital!” exclaimed Bill Johnson.

“A famous selection,” said Tom Short.

“If we don’t have a rasper now,” added John Hogg, “take advantage of my position!”

“In what way?” inquired Mr. Wirkem, smiling.

“Catch me stoopin, sir,” replied Jack, “and kick me.”

A hearty laugh followed this sally, and, when it had ceased, the President passed a hand over his brow, and then commenced.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PHRENOLOGIST.

My paternal ruler, (said he,) Mr. Richard Wirkem, senior, usually called Little Dicky, was one of the queerest fish, perhaps, that was ever found ashore. For many years he kept a whip-shop at Chippenham, in Gloucestershire; and it was his custom, after business-hours, to adjourn to the commercial room of the Old White Hart, to sip his grog, smoke a pipe, and hear the news from the travellers. Nothing delighted him more than to get the *best* of an argument; and he would watch for an opportunity of gratifying this peculiar taste, like a hawk for a spring chicken. He has

been known to chuckle for days to himself when an opponent's been floored, and continually repeat his usual question of "What do you say to that, sir?" when he knew there was no reply to be given.

The governor may be described as "a rum un to look at." He was a very little man, as some people said—and here the old coachman gave an inward, cachinnatory rumble—almost *too short* to pay his debts. However, his height did not interfere in this respect, and, with all who knew him, few had a better name for honesty. His dress invariably consisted of a snuff-brown suit, and, whether he had an idea that some day or other he might shoot up like the bean-stalk of old, I cannot say, but he insisted upon having all his clothes about four sizes too large for him. His shoes with difficulty were kept on in the driest weather, from their being so much too big; and in rainy it was not unusual to see him balancing himself, and fishing, alternately,

first one and then the other from the clinging and sticking mud. His broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat would have extinguished his features, had it not been for the bridge of his prominent, poll-parrot-beaked, roman nose. This hat, when on, caused him to throw his head back upon his shoulders, and expose an extraordinary long, thin neck, encompassed with some yards of white cambric muslin, carefully tied, and in which, for the stiff and formal appearance, one might suppose that he carried a ledger of no slender form. The small portion of grey hair remaining was gathered into a pigtail, which, notwithstanding continued pruning and coaxing, obstinately insisted upon sticking straight out as stiff as the pole of a coach.

One night, just previous to my going to service, he came home from the White Hart rather later than usual; and, taking his seat at the supper-table, began pegging away at a plate of toasted cheese, in any thing but an amiable temper.

“What do you say to that, sir?” said he, finishing the dish.

“Why, that you’ve had more than your whack,” replied I.

“Have I?” returned the old boy. “Then toast another slinker, my dear,” he added, to my mother. “An empty crop is any thing but agreeable. What do you say to that, sir?”

“True as the sun,” said I; “and I’ll prove that I think so presently.”

“I believe, my dear Richard,” observed my mother, “that you’ve been talking about politics to-night, or some such disagreeable subject; for you’re any thing but in a pleasant humour.”

“Yes, I am, marm,” replied my father, fiercely, while his pigtail rose perpendicularly with indignation. “Yes, I am, marm, in a *very* pleasant humour. I never was in so good a humour in all my life before, and never shall be again. What do you say to *that*, marm?”

My mother shut her eyes, and, drawing the

corners of her mouth upwards, looked resignation personified in a mob-cap.

"Smooth your hackles, governor," said I, soothingly. "Don't come the frothy. What's put you out?"

He made no reply for some minutes; but, at length, after many shakes of the head and inward murmurings, said—

"I tell ye what it is, Dick. I've been talking about a subject I never heard of before, and consequently didn't understand."

"Ah! then you got floored," replied I.

"Down I certainly appeared to be when I least thought so," returned he. "But—" and he rubbed his hands with glee—"I'll pluck his fine feathers; I'll strip him of the fig-leaf that covers his naked quackery; I'll lay bare this tricking mountebank; I'll—"

"Pull up," rejoined I, "and let us hear what's this all about."

"This evening," began he, "there was an odd-looking maypole of a chap among the

commercials, that puzzled all the old hands amazingly. He was as like that strange quidnuncs I've read of, called Don Quixote, as one bean resembles another in the same pod; only, instead of the armour, he was dressed in a suit of rusty sables. Upon his nose lodged a pair of the largest black bone spectacles I ever saw in my life, through which he peered and peeped like a child through the glasses of a peep-show. His long hair was combed back behind his ears, which pricked forward like a startled hare's, and altogether I've not seen a stranger chap in all my life."

"I wonder what house he travels for!" said one in a whisper, and pointing to the odd old file, who kept reading a book and taking no notice of any body.

"Can't guess," replied another, "unless it be an undertaker's."

Just at this moment the mysterious individual rose from his chair, and, striding towards

mine, looked steadily at my head, and referred to the book in his hand as he examined it.

“ Well, sir! What do you say to that?” said I, as he turned silently away and resumed his reading.

“ Destructiveness, acquisitiveness, and philoprogenitiveness are strongly developed,” returned he.

“ Are they, sir!” observed I. “ And what may those different nesses refer to?”

“ Gentlemen,” replied he, addressing the company, and pulling from a coat-pocket a large black leather case, “ I’m a professor of the sublime science of phrenology, now occupying the attention of the civilized world. To-morrow evening I purpose giving a lecture in this room upon the subject, and I hope to have your influential and collective patronage. Tickets, one shilling; to admit two, with a glass of lemonade.”

With this he dived his fingers into the case and drew out a bundle of cards, handing one to each of us.

“ There, gentlemen,” continued he, “ read, read, read, and you will learn who is in Chippenham at last. Professor Whiphles, M.D., D.D., LL.D., F.S.A., P.P., and other univ-ersitarial honores cum multis aliis,” added he, with the pomposity of a pope.

Now there was little Jemmy Peabuddy present, who had never heard of a lecture, except a curtain one from the old lady ; and so, said he—

“ What sort of sport is it you’re going to give us — a cock-fight ?”

“ No, sir,” replied the professor, in passion ; thinking, I suppose, Jemmy was making game of him. “ It is *not* a cock-fight ; but a battle of research, and a triumphant struggle over dark and besotted ignorance.”

“ Any thing for a lark,” rejoined Jemmy. “ And so there’s my bob.”

“ Let me add, sir,” said the professor, pocketing the money, “ that you never parted with a shilling to greater advantage in your

life. If it had been your last," continued he, "your *very* last, I would have advised you so to spend it."

The professor gave a sly, foxy look, out of the corners of his eyes, as he delivered this last sentence; and, upon looking at the seal which was on a corner of my ticket, representing a monkey playing at cards with a jackass, I could not help thinking he was more of a knave than a fool, and bore the part of the monkey exceedingly well.

"And now, sir," said I, "since all present have taken a card of admission, perhaps you'll give us an insight of what we are to see and hear."

"You'll see *me*," replied the professor, "and hear a learned and eloquent disquisition upon the theory of phrenology, practically illustrated on the heads of my audience, and made clear to the meanest capacity of the youngest and minutest hearer present."

“ But pray, sir,” said I, “ what is this phrenology ? ”

“ The study of bumps,” replied the professor — “ external callous substances on the scull, like molehills in a pasture, or worm-casts in a gravel-walk. And indeed,” continued he, smiling, “ the comparison is equally original and felicitous. For all proceed from secret and internal pressure, alike governed,” continued he, like one of those wandering actors we had here a few months since, ranting out his queer lingo — “ alike governed by Nature’s systematic arrangement of creating excrescences on a surface. The mole in pursuit of the worm drives his little snout through the ground, and thereby displaces a certain quantity of earth, which raises contiguous substances, and those substances force other neighbouring bodies, till at length the irregularity on the surface is caused, which we know from observation to be a mole-hill. The worm, in like manner,

in pursuit of vegetable matter, more especially young cauliflowers and early peas, or twisting a dry leaf into his little, snug, underground birth for winter comfort, occasions, by precisely the same cause, a corresponding effect. And, I may here observe, that from like causes like effects must follow; as can be familiarly tested by any two gentlemen present holding the tips of their noses in immediate proximity with the flame of this candle; when a white, watery excrescence, called a blister, will be raised on both the organs. Well, gentlemen! the bumps or organs on our heads are—”

“Bumps or organs on our heads!” interrupted I. “In this town, sir, the borough of Chippenham, we’ve neither bumps nor organs. What do you say to that, sir?”

“This,” replied the professor; “that you have only to insert your fingers through those thin and carefully combed hairs, to believe one of your five senses—the sense of feel or touch.”

I poked away for some time, but couldn't feel any, and told him so.

"Then you must be devoid of that sense I gave you credit for," returned the professor. "Sufficient for me to observe," continued he, "that you and every man living have those bumps, and they are formed, as I was about saying when interrupted, by the internal pressure or pushing of the brain. And thus, from these external effects, we can judge of the inward workings of the human mind; divulge the hidden springs to actions, whether good or bad; lay bare the subtle spinner of thought; and reflect, as it were, in the mirror of phrenology, the very intestines of the organs within the scull from which sense and motion arise."

This language sounded very fine, and every body liked it very much, except myself, because not one understood scarcely a word that was said; and it's a strange thing, but it's true, that the less folks comprehend a preacher, the more they admire him.

“Can you tell me what I am by looking outside of my pimple?” inquired Jemmy, almost bewildered at what he heard.

“I can,” replied the professor, “and will teach you the rudiments of this wonderful science in one lecture, for one shilling, to admit two, and a glass of lemonade: so bring all your relations and connexions, of whatever degree, and I’ll astonish their understandings with a new light.”

“I should like you to operate on my sponce now,” said I; “there are a great many of my friends here, and if you judge correctly they’ll know it.”

“Not now,” replied the professor, “but to-morrow night I will, not only on your head, but some others of my audience. I have some casts of the skulls of celebrated men in my travelling trunk, consisting of a few positive murderers, formed naturally to admire throat-cutting as one of the fine arts. I have also a sprinkling of various heroes,

who have quitted this world to the world's advantage in various ways; and I shall exhibit them to you, and show that the various deeds from which their fame emanates resulted from certain natural organs, shoved out upon the skull, in innocent childhood, and might have been discovered there then, had their parents been, what I intend you should become—phrenologists.”

For some minutes he went on in this manner, and regularly astonished all the commercials. Sometimes I joined in, and tried to trip my gentleman up; and just when I thought I had him ready for a fling, out he came with one of his d—d hard words, which completely shut me up. At last, I was obliged to let him have it all his own way, and then he went the pace, I assure ye. Not a soul present but myself disbelieved a word he said, and all thought him a top-sawyer of a chap in the end.

When we got up to go away, and as I was

lifting my hat from the peg, I heard Jemmy Peabuddy whisper to neighbour Styles, "Little Dicky's floored to-night."

"Floored! odds-blood!" exclaimed the governor, "but I'll be one with him to-morrow, my boy."

"And what are ye going to do?" inquired I.

"Go with me to the lecture," replied my father, "and you shall see. By St. George, I'll smoke his bacon!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PHRENOLOGIST CONTINUED.

The next night I accompanied my father to the commercial room of the White Hart, which exhibited a very unusual appearance. The old black mahogany table, which had stood, except on scouring and dusting days, in the centre of the apartment for years and years, was now dragged to the end of the room farthest from the door. Four candles and a glass of water were on it, and also seven plaster of Paris casts, representing the heads and features of as many very ugly persons. Upon the mantel-shelf a pair of mutton fats flared, and a couple more were

placed on a small card-table at the entrance. All this had a very imposing effect; and as the company arrived and occupied the chairs arranged round the room, I began to get quite feverish for the amusement to commence. At length, every seat was filled, while a few stood at the door, like the running over of an hospitable bumper.

Seven was the hour named for the lecturer to begin, and as the last stroke of the church clock fell, in stalked Professor Whiphles, bowing right and left to the assembled audience, and exhibiting much pleasure at the numbers congregated. After rubbing his hands together vigorously, and casting a glimpse apparently at each individual present, he drew a small and thin flabby handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped his face, brow, and ears, very carefully, as a preliminary refresher.

“I’ll give ye a rub presently,” whispered the governor, between his teeth, and, taking a

bundle from the breast of his capacious coat, he put it between his legs, under his chair.

"What have you got there?" inquired I.

"Wait a while," replied my father, "and you'll see."

"Ladies and gentlemen," began Professor Whipples, "I'm truly glad to perceive so many of the enlightened and highly-gifted inhabitants of Chippenham at this my introductory lecture, upon a science, of which I am a humble but enthusiastic supporter."

"Blarney!" exclaimed the governor, in a suppressed voice; "that's the way with all quacks, to flatter, soap, and lard their patients."

"Be quiet," returned I, "let us hear what he has to say."

"It is my intention," continued the professor, "to expound, in the most plain and intelligible phraseology, the fundamental principles of phrenology, combined with physiology and miology."

“How many more ologies?” growled the governor.

“And now to strike at the *os coccygis* of the intricate and marvellous primordial substance,” said Professor Whiphles, placing the forefinger of his left hand on the end of the little one of his right, “I shall indulge in no hypothesis, or doubtful and speculative supposition, but explain and make manifest the indisputable facts gathered from the discoveries of the structure of the human head; realities which have been imperfectly explained and consequently as imperfectly understood. But it is not because the principles of this intelligible science, combining the worth of the seven liberal arts—grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy—have never been defined, that the truth of them is to be denied. They are founded, as I have before intimated, upon the unerring issues of dictatorial nature, and from the effects of her great and universal causes,

admitting of no scepticism; for they are stamped by that hand which created all things, from the earth to the flower, from man to the creeping worm."

"Brayvo!" exclaimed Jemmy Peabuddy. "If that an't tipping the gab slippery, blow me!"

Clapping of hands followed, and the professor's thermometer rose from temperate to blood-heat. This much increased the governor's chagrin, and he kept riggling on his chair like a skinned eel in a stewpan.

"An idea," continued Professor Whiphles, "is created from an impression received directly by one of our five senses; either that of hearing, sight, smell, taste, or touch, and sympathetically by all of them. It therefore follows that without our senses we should be at a loss for ideas. Now, an idea is the intermediate state between an impression and a thought—a sort of hybrid—neither one thing nor the other, but still a necessary stage of

the incubation. For as Rome was not built in a day, neither can a thought be raised, like Jack in the box, at a single jump. Hence, a necessary consequence follows, that without ideas we should be at a loss for thoughts. Now, a thought is an image in the brain, perfect and complete—the germ of action. It may be described as a root from which something is to spring, and in accordance with the fertility or sterility of the soil—in other words, quality—so will the crop or production be, figuratively speaking, worthy or unworthy of the reaping.”

“I say, Dicky,” observed Neighbour Styles, the butcher, “the parson would stand but a poor chance in a round of jaw with him, eh?”

“Paugh!” exclaimed the governor. “Pish! It’s all my eye and Betty Martin.”

“With this brain,” resumed the professor, after sipping about as much water from the glass as a sparrow would take at a draught,

“with this brain, which I have familiarly compared to arable land, I shall have more to do immediately. For, after all, it signifies nothing, little more or less, what our impressions consist of—upon which our ideas are suspended, and upon which ideas our thoughts are dependants—unless the brain be capable of affording sufficient nutriment to rear and expand them. For, if we sow wheat-seed and thistle-down upon the barren rock, neither will spring or vegetate, but the nuclei will rot in the ungenerous locality. Now, agriculturists acquaint themselves with the nature of the soil, discovering whether it consists of marl, loam, chalk, gravel, sand, or other kinds of earths, before they adopt a method of cultivating it. This they do to prevent their labour being lost, the waste and consumption of time, and other incidental expenses. But let me ask if any mother or father present ever tried to discover the quality of her or his interesting progeny’s intellectual soil, pre-

vious to sending them to school, binding them apprentices, or articling them to professions? Let me inquire if any schoolmaster in this delightful town and exceedingly picturesque neighbourhood ever endeavoured to become acquainted with the natural powers of his pupil's brain, previous to administering the birch on that part of the person erroneously conjectured to be capable (on the principle that 'extremes meet') of supplying its defects?"

"No, no, no," replied several voices from different quarters of the room. "No, no, certainly not. Go on—go on."

"I was convinced that such must be the answer," replied the professor, "from so intelligent and enlightened an audience. I have no hesitation in saying, that there is not an instructor of youth living," continued he, "who ever had the sagacity to feel the bumps—concerning which I am now about to treat—on the cerebrum and cerebellum of his scho-

lars, previous to barborously creating bumps on the opposite terminus, by way of supplying, perchance, an imaginary deficiency. These pedagogues operate in the dark ——."

"There I begs your pardon," interrupted Jemmy Peabuddy. "My master always tipped *me* the flax without so much as the tail of my shirt for a screen."

A roar of laughter followed this declaration of Jemmy's, and the professor seemed to enjoy it as much as anybody.

"Metaphorically speaking," continued he, "I should have said, these pedagogues work in the dark. They, unlike the tiller of the land, do not consider whether the brain be capable of expanding an arithmetical impression, a geometrical, geological, ornithological, entymological, or any other one of the abstruse studies. Sufficient for them is it to clump the unfortunate urchins in a class, the capacitated with the incapacitated, and tyrannically to create external impressions upon

the unoffending bodies of those whose minds are naturally mal-formed for the mental or internal impressions desired to be given. Now, I appeal to all mothers and fathers—but mothers in particular, for their natures are more tender, and consequently less callous, and far more prone to be sympathetic for suffering humanity in a sitting position—I say I appeal to these mothers and fathers, and ask whether a science that embraces as positive and decided a knowledge of the peculiar qualities of the brain from a cursory glance at the skull, a little surveying and feeling, as that knowledge which is gained by the geologist, agriculturist, or farmer, concerning the adaptation of certain lands for certain purposes, by an external examination of them—I ask whether such a science is not worthy of the study of all—from the king to the turnspit?”

“It is, it is,” shouted an old fat woman, filling and more than filling her capacious

chair. "It is, sir; as a *mother*, I says it, and no mistake."

"I dare say it is no mistake, ma'am," rejoined Professor Whiphles, placing his right hand on the left of his breast, and making her a profound bow.

"That it ain't, sir," returned the loquacious old lady. "For I've twelve children living, and two still-born ditto in heaven; rest their souls!"

"The utility," resumed the professor, "of this wonderful branch of knowledge must therefore be palpable to everybody. A parent has but to become acquainted with it, in order to decide upon the trade, profession, or calling, that his child or children—as the case may be, but it generally happens in most families to be the latter—are best qualified to follow, and not only follow, but to overtake to advantage. It not unfrequently occurs that a father is desirous that his son should become a musician. In order to effect this,

perhaps a fiddle is purchased, a teacher hired, and after both are *paid* for, and a vast deal of excruciating torture inflicted on countless ears by his attempting to learn the first bar of 'In my cottage near a wood,' it is discovered that the boy has no ear. No ear, indeed!" exclaimed Professor Whiphles, pausing. "No ear, indeed!" repeated he. "Pooh, pooh! the child possesses ears enough, perhaps, and I think it not probable, longer ones than his father. But the fact is, the organ of music was wanting, and this might have been known just as well before the fiddle had been bought as afterwards, by a phrenological examination. I give this merely as an example of the benefits, pecuniary and otherwise, to be derived from the study and pursuit of the science of phrenology.

"And now comes the important part of my discourse, which treats of the way in which the index of the mind may be referred to. But I must first tell ye how and in what

way it is compiled. The brain may be compared to a honeycomb, having various and multifarious cavities or divisions, each cavity or division having its allotted quantity of matter formed for the reception of defined ideas. Each of these are technically termed organs, and on the quantity and quality of the material with which they are charged depends the crop of thoughts to be raised. As in the honeycomb, some of the cells of the brain are empty, some partly so, and others full. Now, it must be quite clear, that from the empty vessels nothing can be extracted; take nothing from nothing, and nothing remains. Hence it follows, that if the organ of music be like a perforated egg, puffed and blown, the proprietor of it must necessarily make but a sorry musician. I need scarcely add that the same rule will apply to all the other organs, or divisions of the brain, of which more hereafter."

The professor again applied the handkerchief to his perspiring face.

“ Ugh, you oily serpent!” exclaimed my father, in an under-tone, disgusted with the professor’s increasing popularity.

“ Don’t call him a sarpent,” replied Jemmy Peabuddy, in an audible whisper, overhearing the governor’s words: “ You see he’s only a *viper*!” and then Jemmy giggled at his own joke until the tears streamed from his eyes.

“ And now, ladies and gentlemen,” recommenced Professor Whiphles, “ I must call your attention most particularly to the concluding portion of this lecture. I have given a general outline of the causes; I now arrive at the effects. There is nothing so desirable to my mind as simple and familiar similies to illustrate an abstruse and difficult branch of knowledge. I therefore shall proceed to indulge in them. We all know that a bulbous-root, provided it be a sound one, after

remaining a sufficient time in the ground for vegetating and expanding, lifts the earth as it rises, and forms an elevation on the surface. In like manner, the ideas shooting from the organs, the construction of which I have before described, raise the superficies of the skull, and form excrescences or bumps. By referring therefore to these bumps, and being acquainted by anatomical research with the localities of the respective organs, we learn the active affections of the mind, because these excrescences are the effects of the affections. And, by finding the surface flat over other organs of the head, we learn that they are passive, or without effect. Hence, by discovering what a man *has* got in his head, and what he has *not* got in his head, we are enabled to form a pretty accurate opinion of his mental capacities."

The professor stopped and sipped his water.

"It may appear—indeed it *would* appear—to the vulgar," continued he, "an idle, a very

idle boast for me to say that there's not a creature living, from a child of three years old to an old man of three score and ten, but I could accurately describe his passions or affections, or want of both or either. Such, however, is the truth, and I challenge the whole world to the test. And I not only can tell myself, but I can teach others the science in one course of three lectures, at the moderate charge of one shilling per lecture, to admit two, and a glass of lemonade. Contemplate for one moment the infinite gratification to be derived from being able to look into one's neighbour's head as if it was made of transparent glass. Think of the fund of amusement, besides profit, that is to be obtained by taking a bird's-eye view of the inward working of the brains of our acquaintance. Upon my life!" exclaimed Professor Whiphles, "the more one dwells upon the subject, the longer one feels inclined to do so. It seems as 'if increase of appetite doth grow by what it feeds on.'

However, just to put the finishing stroke to this introductory discourse, and then to dismiss ye."

The professor here selected a cast from the group on the table, and, placing it in a conspicuous place before him, drew a couple of the candles close to it, and proceeded.

"This is a cast from the head of a celebrated individual," said he, "who was singularly adapted for the profession he chose to follow, that of supplying subjects for the purposes of anatomy. This is the notorious Mr. Bishop, a gentleman who met with a premature decease in the vicinity of the Old Bailey, for a too enthusiastic prosecution of his vocation. In other words, he was hung for stopping the inflation of the lungs of a little Italian boy, and conveying the body in a cab to a certain hospital for dissection. The British public, who, like Irish pigs, are certain to run the wrong way, if by any possibility it is to be managed, took it for granted, and as a matter

of course, that this man was a monster, possessing the most ignoble, blood-thirsty, and vicious affections that a human being could possess ; and a few eminent phrenologists even were confounded at finding veneration and sympathy strongly developed, and the organ of destructiveness scarcely palpable. Whereas, this misjudged victim *must* have suffered—from the natural formation of his head, in which, as I have before observed, there *can* be no mistake—his overflowing sympathy must have drowned his fears of the risk he was running in accomplishing his designs, and have caused him to become a destroyer of his species, more particularly those who were friendless and homeless, in order to ensure their lasting peace, quietude, and escape from all earthly ills. The conception was sublime and charitable to the superlative degree, although one I cannot recommend as an example, from the extremely dangerous consequences that may follow. However, what I wish to impress on

your minds is, how wrong may be the opinions formed from actions, *prima facie* — that is to say, by *prying in face* merely—by those persons ignorant of phrenology, the centre stone in the diadem of philosophy.

“In my next lecture, ladies and gentlemen, I shall describe the several organs, and the respective purposes of their construction, with other interesting details and particulars concerning the formation of the human head ; and beg at the same time to say, if there be any person present who wishes to make an observation concerning what I have said or am going to say, he is at perfect liberty to do so, and he shall receive my most respectful attention.”

“Well, sir !” exclaimed the governor, rising suddenly on his feet, “I *have* something to say.”

“Pray, sir, proceed,” replied Professor Whiphles, bowing low, and smiling in the most insinuating manner.

“Many a cock will fight well enough on his

own dunghill," returned my father, "that'll turn tail off it."

"That's true enough," observed Jemmy Peabuddy, who was a lover of an exhibition between the pugnacious birds, armed *cap-à-pie*.

"Now, sir," continued the governor, "you've given us a speech ready cut and dried, and one, I'll be bold to say, repeated so often, that it would puzzle your box of knowledge to alter one word, or even so much as one single letter of it."

"Shameful, shameful!" interrupted the old matron, who had previously referred to the number and state of her progeny.

"No, marm," returned the governor, "speaking the truth is not shameful, or *you* would have held your tongue. What do you say to that, marm?"

"Be kind enough, for *my* sake," added Professor Whiphles, with a patronising air, "not to interrupt the speaker. I can bear the taunts of the ignorant——"

“Ignorant!” exclaimed the governor, his eyes darting forth daggers and every kind of sharp-edged cutlery. “But stop a bit,” and he clenched his teeth together, and smiled grimly as he proceeded. “I understood, sir, that you intended to prove the legitimacy of your science, as you call it, by operating on my head in the presence of my neighbours, or some of theirs in mine, so that we might come upon our own judgments as to the genuineness of it. But instead of this, you make, I admit, a plausible kind of speech, prepared for the occasion, use a great many hard words which nobody here understands, describe the character of a rascal in anything but a rascally light, and then tell us to come again for another dish at the same price.”

“In my next discourse I shall do as you express a wish,” observed the professor; “but surely”—and he looked round the room as an appeal to the discrimination of the company—“surely you wouldn’t have me place the cart before the horse?”

"Certainly not," replied the governor; "but I think *now's* the time to clap in the oss; or if it's only just to shove the collar over his head, it would satisfy me."

"What do you mean?" inquired the professor.

"Thinking that you would stick to the text," replied my father, "I had my hair cut a little shorter, and a few other matters done to it already, for the examination of my head. And I also brought," said he, getting the bundle from under the chair, "the cast of a head with me, taken by a gentleman present, which I expected you would have looked at and——"

"Bring it here," interrupted Professor Whiphles, in a voice of triumph, "bring it here, and I will roll the clouds of doubt from your foggy brain, as the glorious sun dispels the morning's mist."

The governor untied the bundle, and, taking a white, hollow lump of stuff from it, gave it into the hands of the professor.

"Ah!" exclaimed he, "the cast, and a very perfect one, of the head of a child."

"Where did you get that from?" asked I.

"Hush!" replied my father. "Wait a bit, Dick, and you'll hear."

As he said this, I thought I heard a giggle in a corner of the room, and, looking that way, I saw Phil Dyke, a bricklayer and plasterer, almost dying with laughter.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the professor, spreading his fingers upon the cast, and looking at it with admiration, "I of course must be ignorant of the character of the original of this cast by any means of information or association, other than those I profess to have in my own resources."

"Decidedly so, decidedly so," observed the governor.

Cries of "Fair play! Two to one on the professor! Go it, Old Spectacles! Never say die to a dead cat!"

"Whether the parents be present or not,"

continued the professor, "I also, as a matter of course, must be ignorant, being a perfect stranger to all. But if they be, let me inform them that, if their child, from whom this cast was taken, is still in this breathing world"—the professor paused, and, looking steadily at my father, added—"and lives to arrive at the age of maturity, he or she will do honour to their honourable name. And if," said he, casting his eyes upwards, and mournfully shaking his head, "he or she has been called from this wicked world in the bud and blossom of existence, they may rest assured heaven is the place of its emigration. 'Twould be useless, and consequently unnecessary, for me to explain the respective organs developed in this skull, because we have not yet arrived at that stage of the proceedings, and you would not understand me if I did; but here we have veneration, imagination—in short," continued he, vehemently, "there is not a noble attribute pertaining to humanity that the brain was not

organised to receive impressions for. Now, sir, have I stated a correct opinion of your child — I mean,” added Professor Whiphles, correcting himself, “of the character of the original from whom this cast was taken with so much skill?”

“I’m sure I can’t say exactly, Mr. Professor,” replied the governor, “for it came from no head of a child of mine, nor any body else’s.”

Professor Whiphles stared, and each particular hair rose from his scalp, as the fear of a successful trick having been practised upon him flashed on his mind.

“This, sir,” added my father again, taking something from the bundle, and holding it above his head, “is the block from which that cast was taken—as fine a *Swedish turnip* as ever was grown!”

Professor Whiphles was dumbfounded, as all eyes were turned alternately from the turnip to him, and from him to the turnip.

“As fine a Swedish turnip as ever was grown,” repeated my father, skipping into the middle of the room, and offering it for general inspection; “and Phil Dyke there is the moulder. What do you say to that, sir?” inquired he; and then bursting into a roar of laughter, he made the room ring again with his triumphant merriment.

The professor tried to reply, but the words died upon his lips. He felt the net was too strong, and that it was useless to give even a farewell kick; and, with the patience of a beaten jackass, he submitted to the cudgelling now so unmercifully bestowed. Taunts, gibes, and sneers, were poured upon him thicker than hailstones, till he could bear them no longer; and, slinking from the apartment, he sneaked away, never more to lecture upon phrenology in the good town of Chippenham.

“Such, my friends,” observed Mr. Wirkem, “are the facts as they took place some thirty

years ago, when I was just beginning to sow my wild tares. But come," continued he, "our time's up, and 'though many have circled the board since we met,' still we'll have a parting glass, ay, and a bumper. So fill away."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MUDLARK.

"I shall make a reg'lar mull of it, Mr. Wirkem, sir," observed John Hogg, to some request that had been made to him the succeeding meeting of the club, "I know I shall, sir. Hadn't you better pass me by?" inquired he.

"No, John, no," replied the President. "Come, gather up the ribands, and lead away."

"Lor', sir!" rejoined Jack, "I feel like a hantiquated walnut, kept too long. There's not a morsel o' kernel in me."

"Nonsense, John, nonsense," returned Mr.

Wirkem; "you must have seen many an up-an-down, touch-an-go, rough-an-smooth, in your life, I know."

"Ah! that I have," sighed Jack, "from my hatchin until this very night, Mr. Wirkem, sir, I've seen little else."

"Then, hammer away," responded the President; "you've metal enough on your anvil."

"Well, sir! then, here goes," returned one-eyed Jack, "although, as somebody said at the play, I think you'll find it 'full of sound and fury, signifyin nothin.' You never heard o' my pedigree, did you, sir?" inquired he of the President.

"No," briefly replied Mr. Wirkem.

"Then, I think I can't do better than just give ye it," rejoined John Hogg, "with a remarkable odd way in which my male parent picked up a fortune."

"Picked up a fortune!" repeated his patron, in surprise.

“Yes, Mr. Wirkem, sir,” returned Jack; “but you shall hear:” and, pushing his pail a little from the festive board, as if to avoid the tempting varieties within reach, while spinning the thread of his narrative, he “gave tongue” to the following.

I’m one o’ those what love good breedin in every animal that walks, crawls, swims, or flies. I don’t care what it is—from a duke to a rat, from a oss to a cuckoo; give me ’em thorough-bred—them’s my sentiments! What should we be without blood, I should like to know? a set o’ milk-an-water, fishy creatures, not worth the salt to our porridge. By blood, Mr. Wirkem, sir, and gentlemen, I mean *pluck*; out-an-out, tip-top courage. From a turn-up with a couple o’ bull-dogs, to a scratchin match between a brace of old women, let me see pluck and I’m satisfied; but to see a white feather in either of their tails, it’s a sight to make one blush for one’s

speeches: it is indeed. Whenever I chance to meet with a thing o' the kind, (and thank God it isn't often,) I try to think there must be a French cross in the constitootion, and thereby shove a little ointment on the wound.

In consequence of this partickler feelin on my part, I'm, perhaps, proud of a origin which many chaps would like to forget to remember, seein as how my old cockalorum of a father was, what most folks call, a mud-lark: but wasn't he a cock-lark, that's all! (said Jack, exultingly, as he thought with reverential pride of his immediate progenitor.) John Hogg's father was a male boar, gentlemen, I can tell ye; a reg'lar tearer. I believe there was nothin on earth, or under it, but what he could look at straight in the face, without so much as a sinny of his body movin; and he often did one or two awkward customers, such as—(and the speaker lowered his voice)—sometimes naked starvation, poverty generally, and a hopelessness of bet-

tering his condition always, from one year's end to the other: and yet, from his smooth-lookin face, on which was never seen a frown, you might suppose, sirs, he had his pipe and pint of half-an-half daily.

We used to live in a court near the Adelphi, a dark, narrow sort of alley, which slanted to the river, and down which a stream of black, slimy mud used to creep nearly all the year round. The earliest that I can remember, is squattin on the side of it, makin ships and boats out o' the cabbage-leaves and egg-shells that floated down it; and in this harmless and innocent amusement I passed my early days.

It pleased God that I should be the only little kid my mother had alive out of nine; which to her was the cause of much grief; for she used to say continually, "if that child only had some brothers and sisters to play with, he wouldn't be such a nasty little beast."

“Clean enough to follow his father’s trade,” the governor would reply. “Stick to the mud, Jack, stick to the mud, my boy, and that will stick to you.”

At break of day, and even before, winter and summer, hot, cold, wet, or dry, he used to throw his sack over his shoulder, and takin the only tool necessary for his employment, a piece of iron bent at one end to clear out the narrow gutters with, sally out to pick up his living, and supply our daily bread. Every dunghill was carefully examined in his beat; and, as he walked along the crowded streets, perhaps he didn’t see a single face throughout the live-long day; for his eyes, from practice, were always to the ground, so that the mite of the smallest value shouldn’t escape him.

At low tide he used to potter along the shore, and bag every morsel of coal dropped from the barges; bones, pieces of rag, paper, any thing that could be turned to any account

was grabbed by the governor, and considered a prize. Not seldom, when articles was scarce, when "trade was slack," as he called it, he'd dive into the mouths o' the common sewers from the Thames, and wander up 'em, I've heard him say, for a mile an more, in search of any thing that might chance to hang by the way; and then it was occasionally he used to have such tuzzles with the rats. Scores of 'em would fly at him at once, and hang upon him like leeches. Then, with his iron crook, he'd beat 'em off, and with hollowin and hootin get rid of 'em for a time; but they seldom gave him longer than just sufficient to call more of their mates, and then they'd come again, troopin down to him, with the noise of a flock o' sheep, in such numbers, that nobody could believe without hearin 'em. But when this happened, he used to turn tail, and budge as fast as he could trot, for it was no use to attempt to face 'em after they'd made an attack; there were such quantities,

and all as savage as starvation could make any thing.

I don't know whether you'll think it exactly an honest stroke of business, Mr. Wirkem, sir, (continued Jack, with the shade of an appearance of embarrassment,) but the governor had a great slice of luck on one partickler occasion ——.

“Honesty,” interrupted the President, “is the best of policy in all matters. It comes rather late in the evening sometimes, but after all it's the best and safest vehicle. Not that I'm one of those better-than-my-neighbour people who condemn every passenger that doesn't happen to travel by her. It's all very well,” continued Mr. Wirkem, “for a fat city alderman, larded with turtle and clouted cream, with ten thousand pounds in his banker's hands—or supposed to be there, which does not always turn out to be the case—and ten times ten more in the funds, with a few vessels and houses as odds an

ends, to talk about the virtue of honesty. He can *afford* to be honest, and it sounds and reads very fine in the police reports, when one of these lap-soups expresses his indignation at a poverty-stricken, homeless, starving, neglected boy—brought up, perhaps, in the nursery of crime—being detected in picking a pocket. He wonders at the audacity of the little thief being a *second* time brought before him for a similar offence; reminds him of having given him a warning to turn from his evil ways, with a lecture for his future observance; and then sends him to prison and to punishment, with the zest of having done a good and charitable deed.

“ But his worship forgets that where one crime is committed from choice, a thousand are from necessity. He forgets that the branded felon, when turned from his gloomy cell, has no path save the one which led him to it. There is no hand to guide the would-be penitent, no voice to cheer him, no pity to

soften and ameliorate; but craving want goads the wretch, and he sins again because he *must*. No, no, no. Before we shake our heads, and turn our eyes to heaven, like thirsty ducks, when we hear of a slip from the road of honesty, we should first of all learn the *cause* of the stumbling. For some of us, like blind osses, can't see the block before us. Others are either flogged or backed on to it. Some turn the corner so sharp that they come upon it unawares, and down they go all of a sudden, as unexpectedly as though a stroke of lightning cut 'em to the ground. A few run clean away at the start, and, getting the bit between their teeth, make a smashing run of it, like a team of runaway colts, all for fun and frolic, until crash they come against the upsetter, and over they go, with broken knees and blemishes to be carried the longest day they have to live.

“ But it is n't for us to say, when we see a blemish or broken knee, that it was got by

real out-an-out vice. More are got by accidents, I assure ye ; and I think that man will find, when his tally comes to be squared, that the more mercy he shows to his upset mates on the road of life, the more will be extended unto him. But come, John, my lad," added Mr. Wirkem, " I've shoved in my pole much too long. Go on, my boy."

" What I was a-goin to say, sir," replied John Hogg, " is, the governor had a thick slice of luck in the shape of another man's clear-out ruin."

" That which is one fellow's bread is another chap's poison," chimed in the President.

There was a fire at the corner of Adam Street, Adelphi, of a silversmith's shop, (continued one-eyed Jack.) I was then just about ten year old, and I think I see the silver things a-meltin now and pourin down the walls, as the flames roared and licked 'em, just as so much water. There was a wonder-

ful crowd, and I dare say a great many of their fingers itched to scoop up a few pails o' that fluid, but a regiment of soldiers kept 'em off, and not a soul was allowed to get near by many, many yards. However, they didn't think of guardin the stuff that ran along with the water into the sewer, and so the governor, after watchin the proceedins for some time, took hold o' my left lug and said—"Jack, come along with me."

"What for?" inquired I.

"It's time that you should begin your purfession," replied he, a-makin me trot by his side as he strode towards the river. "And, although the old ooman may squeak at it a little, yet the lining of your bag to-night will soften her chant."

"If you get me into a mess," replied I, "she'll sing a pretty tune to both of us. You know she can't abide to see me nasty."

"I know that," returned my father. "But your load will make ye seem sweeter in her

eyes, Jack, than ye ever yet did, either to sight or smell. Gold, Jack, gold makes a nigger white, in many a nice and delicate eye."

By this time we had arrived on the banks of the river; and the governor, directin me to stick close to his heels, climbed on to the side of a coal-barge, and then, hoppin from one to another, moored alongside, got down upon the mud, and slumped through it, up to his knees, to the mouth of a large, open drain. I stuck close to him, although I expected more than once in my journey to find myself stickin up to my neck, and even a trifle or so above it.

"Now," said my father, "although it is so fine a moonlight night, we must have an addition to it;" and, takin a tinder-box from his pocket, he lit his dark lantern. "You see, Jack," continued he, "this drain isn't wide enough to let me in, but it is for you; so mind what I'm a-goin to say to ye."

“ I will, father,” replied I, “ but can’t we wait till to-morrow ?”

“ To-morrow !” exclaimed he. “ Faugh ! there’ll be a dozen in it afore to-morrow. Are ye afraid, ye cur ?”

“ No, no,” returned I, “ don’t think that ;” but I was all the time a little shaky.

“ Then down on your hands and knees,” said the governor, “ and crawl up the drain until you come near the gratin down which the slush from the fire is a-pourin. Take this sprig of iron, and grope for all the stuff— mark me ! *all* the stuff you can find which looks like melted lead. That’s silver, Jack, that is ; so mind and don’t lose a morsel.”

“ But look,” replied I, “ how the water is a-comin out of the drain now ; I shall be half drowned.”

“ No matter if ye are a good deal nearer than half. In with ye,” said my father, “ and make no more bother about it. I’ll take care that not a bit so big as a pea shall be washed out without my grabbin it.”

Doin as I was ordered, down I went on my knees, with the lantern in one hand, the iron crook in the other, and the sack slung across my shoulder, to examine, for the first time in my life, that rummy sort of a receptacle for all manner o' things, a common sewer. It was a dreadful-lookin place. Here and there a heap of bricks had crumbled from the sides and fallen, from the burrowin of the rats, which I could hear squeakin and shriekin in all directions. Black and slimy water rushed past me as I crept shudderin along; and, when I had got about twenty yards from the entrance, I saw a drove o' the vermin runnin before me on a sort of parapet they had made, to avoid the water, I suppose. Sometimes they let me get quite close to them, and showed their teeth and grinned at me, as if every moment they meant to have a fightin-bout.

I could now hear the water pourin down the gratin my father mentioned, and began

to poke about for the silver, when I felt something clingin to my left thigh, just out of the water. Upon stoppin to look what it was, there was the largest rat I ever saw in my life, stickin to me. He was almost white about the head with age, and had been washed down the stream from want of strength, I expect. I tried to shake him off, but he had fixed his teeth so firmly in my trowsers that it was not until I had struck him twice with the iron crook that he quitted his hold and fell.

Cold, wet, and shiverin with funkyness, I groped about for the silver, but it was not until I got close to the gratin that I found any; and then, indeed, there was a heap, blistered, knotted, and lookin just like so much lead that had been run through the bars of a grate. I now forgot my fears, the rats, and the cold, and commenced pickin up the metal in that horrible place, with as much pleasure as a gleaner gathers up the stray wheat-ears in the August sun.

Carefully I put every morsel I could find into my bag, and I even waited to see if more would come with the water which continued to pour down; but none did, and I then turned round and commenced returning from the drain, with a good solid load over my shoulders. I had got about half-way back, when, somehow or other, my lantern slipped between my fingers and left me in darkness.

Quicker than it takes a flame to scorch a feather, I was baited by the rats in such numbers that I gave myself as dead rats'-meat, without the hope of a chance of a mizzle. On my hands, body, arms, neck, head, and cheeks they fastened like a swarm of gnats on an ashen bough; and, notwithstanding my hollowin and bellowin, they began tearin away at me like a parcel of hungry schoolboys at a plum-cake.

"Hilloa! What's the matter, Jack?" I heard my father cry.

“ Matter !” shrieked I. “ I’m bein murdered and eat up alive.”

“ Run, then — run, boy, for your life !” hallooed the governor.

As fast as my hands and feet would let me, I scampered along, every second yard fallin head-foremost into the filthy water and mire, and my enemies bitin and stickin to me in the most cruel manner. Before, behind, at each side, and on me they crowded, squeakin, knawin, and shriekin, like so many devilish cannibals. At last I caught a glimpse of light from the mouth of the drain, makin my heart swell like a soaked penny-roll, and towards it I bolted at my best pace. No fox nearly pulled down, and yet determined for a last trial of his pads, ever took to ’em with a greater will than I did, as the long-tailed vermin hunted me even to the end of the sewer, and as I toppled head-foremost out of it, a brace of ’em were hanging to my neck, and my father brushed them off and killed ’em.

The Huntsman



*The long tailed vermine hunted me even
to the end of the sewer.*



“My poor boy,” said father, taking me up in his arms like a mother would a babby—for even a mudlark has as good feelins as other sorts of animals—“Jack, my dear boy, where are ye hurt?”

“Everywhere,” replied I. “There isn’t a square inch of me but’s had a nibble. And as to some parts, specially behind, they’re all one solid bite.”

“We mustn’t go home in this condition,” said he, “although I feel you have got a lump o’ the right sort to soften down the old ooman’s temper for the plight she’ll find ye in;” and sitting me on the edge of a barge, he washed my bleeding wounds in the water that just began to flow at his feet.

The night was very bright; a sharp frosty air whistled from the east, and the moon and the stars sparkled like frozen sleet in the sun. After the governor had scraped off the worst part of the slush, cleaned my face, and did the best he could for me, he shelled

out the contents of the sack upon the side o' the wessel, and commenced countin and feelin the pieces of silver with wonderful pleasure.

"I feel, Jack," said the governor, smilin, as if a feather was blown into his ear, "I feel, Jack, as though I could play leap-frog with the lamp-posts. There's a hundred ounces if there's one."

"If there hadn't been a good swag," replied I, almost fit to blubber with smarting so, "there'd a-been a deal o' pain for short commons o' profit."

"As common as ditchwater, that is," added my father, fixin the sack over his shoulders, "and we ought to be well satisfied when we get moderate profits to a lump o' labour or pain. However, Jack, get on my back, and I'll carry ye home."

When we arrived, my mother began to rave at seein blood on my face and hands, suspectin I had been run over, or some such

calamity; but when all was explained to her, and she was told the lumps of metal, which she took for lead, was all real silver, I never *shall* forget how she laughed and cried both at the same time, like rain and sunshine in April. "What shall we buy first, my dear?" inquired she. "What shall we buy first?"

"We must think of sellin first, old ooman," replied my father.

"Ah! so we must," returned she. "I quite forgot that. But who will buy silver?"

"That's the question that puzzles me at this moment," responded the governor. "If I take it to a Jew he'll give me about one-fifth what it's worth, and peach upon me if I don't strike a bargain. If I offer it to a straight sailin tradesman he won't have it at no price."

"What! isn't it honest to pick up what would be sure to be lost?" asked my mother, in great surprise.

"Yes," said the governor, "but it isn't lawful to keep or turn it to our own advantage."

"Lawful or not," responded my mother, "I'd do it."

"I shall," added the governor. "The only thing to consider is the best way of managin it."

"Supposin you was to take it to the owner," observed I, "what would he give us for our labour and honesty?"

"His thanks," shortly replied my father. "No, no, no, Jack, we'll have no such return for your bein hunted by such rats as swarm in the Adelphi. We can't afford to rely on strange folks' generosity for *our* work."

"Go to old Abraham," suggested my mother. "He gives ye a pretty fair allowance for the odd silver spoons you pick up now and then."

"I think I shall," returned the governor;

“but to-night I’ll think of it, and as we’ve had such a windfall, old dear, get us some sheeps’ trotters, a dish of cow-heel, and a quart pot o’ the best swipes.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE MUDLARK CONTINUED.

About six months after this pearl, which fell into the governor's mouth as unexpected as a feller catching one in a hail-storm, and the little store that came from it was gone, (continued one-eyed Jack,) the governor and myself then began to look sharp about, and precious sharp too, for more leavins. For I should say, so long as it lasted, he, mother, and me, lived superior to the *generality* of fightin cocks. Peas-puddin and bacon for breakfast, with lots of Barclay and Perkins; rump-steaks and oyster-sauce, with a quart to each of our mugs of the best Scotch ale for

dinner, which mother got ready a couple of hours before other people's; fried tripe, cow-heel, and trotters, for supper, with a few quarterns of blue ruin for the old birds, and a treacle posset for me, was the daily furniture for our insides. "To live well as long as we can," was a standin sayin with the governor; "and may we live long as long as we can live well," a sort of answer from my mother whenever he made it. However, the last pound was changed, and then we thought it time to look out afresh, for ever since the silver was picked up, the governor was too proud to bag common scraps.

"Jack," said he, on the night we were havin a last tuck-out of the remainder o' the change, "I've been too nice lately in my choice of articles, but if somethin doesn't turn up soon, we must take to skinnin cats, and such like low occupations."

"Ah!" sighed mother, a-tossin off a seventh go and two outs of Booth's best, "we should

a-been more savin o' the tin. We should indeed. But, alackaday! it's no use a-sobbin for your digested wittals; so take a suck at the glass and *at 'em agin!*" and then the governor shook his fat ribs—for he picked up flesh uncommonly quick since keepin the nose-bag continually on — and laughed as though he expected to remain fat and idle for the rest of his days.

"Never fear, old ooman," replied he; "we knew well enough what it was to box Harry for many a day's prog, and now we've had a taste of the way noblemen live all the days o' their lives."

"And a great comfort it is to be able to say so," returned mother. "I only wish the taste had a little more length in it."

I don't believe it was more than a week after all the money was gone, and we were as bad off as ever, when my father returned late one night with a bag full of skins, odds, and ends.

“You should have been with me to-day, Jack,” said he, emptying the sack on to the floor. “I’ve had another shady walk up the sewers, and a very pleasant one it was.”

“Not so profitable a one as mine, I’ll be bound to say,” replied I.

“I hope more so,” replied the governor, as serious as a parson. “You’ve heard the old saw, ‘it never rains but it pours,’ and my name isn’t Hogg if I don’t think it’s come down upon us agin thicker than ever.”

“You don’t say so, my dear Thomas!” exclaimed my mother, throwin her arms round father’s neck. “What, have ye found a bag o’ diamonds?”

“No, old ooman,” replied the governor, pickin out of the heap of rubbish a thick, dirty roll of parchment, to which two iron weights were fixed very securely. “But I found this in a kind of bye-drain near the Temple stairs,” continued my father.

“And what of that?” returned my mother, much disappointed with the prize.

"I hope more than you expect, old dear," added the governor. "You see," continued he, "I know that it's a law-paper of some kind or other, and these six-ounce weights were not tied to it to make it float in water."

"Certainly not," replied my mother. "What then?"

"It's fair to suppose," continued he, "they were put there just for an opposite purpose—to sink it."

"Very likely," rejoined my mother.

"Now without an object few people, unless they are crazy ones, do any thing," said my father. "And as most acts are performed to scrape up a benefit for the doer, or to dig out an injury to the done, it's my opinion this smacks of the common sort, with this addition—"

"Let's hear it, my dear Thomas," said my mother, eager to hear as a pike to gorge a minnow.

"That it's buttered on both sides," added

the governor; "benefit to the sinker, and injury to some unfortunate individual in whose favour it was made."

"I see, I see," said my mother. "You'll find him out, and make him give a jolly bribe for the findin it."

"I'm not partickler which of the hims," responded the governor. "The chap that came the artful dodge would give as much, I'm a-thinkin, or perhaps a trifle more," continued he, "than the innocent feller who, mayhap, is kept out of his rights. For it's surprisin how liberal folks become when they're found out at a unlawful proceedin. I've heard 'em offer more money to be let off than they ever got by doin it."

"But we don't know it is a act of priggin," observed my mother.

"Very likely it isn't," replied the governor, "but I'm in hopes it's as bad. At any rate, the thing looks well as a speculation, and if something doesn't turn out good of it, I shall be deceived, that's all."

"If we could but read," said my mother, "we might settle the business right away."

"And as we can't," returned the governor, "we must get somebody to lend us a hand."

"There's Bob Sniggs, the dustman's son," said I, "can read like a parson. Shall I call him in?"

"Do, my boy," replied the governor; "he may be able to give us a peep into the pie."

"Ah!" sighed my mother, "what an education that boy's had, to be sure. I'm told he can tell how many barley-corns reached round the world, or *would* reach round, which I can't say."

In a short time Bob, who was a year or two older than me—a great, fat, bouncible sort of a pal o' mine—was sittin before a table with a fresh farthin dip on it, tryin to make out what the writin was about. But he seemed wonderful puzzled at the outset, and rubbed his head as though all his brains wanted greasin.

"Can't ye make out a word or two?" asked the governor.

"Oh yes!" replied Bob, "I should just say I could; but I can't make out no sense on 'em."

"Never mind that," returned the governor. "Do you read, and leave the sense to me."

"With your common sense, Thomas," said my mother, "what an uncommon sensible man you'd make if you could but read an write."

"Thank'e, old ooman," returned the governor; "but give your clapper a rest, and let Bob go on."

"'In the name of God,' it begins," commenced Bob.

"The devil it does!" added my father.

"'Amen,' continued Bob. "'I, George Soaker, being of sound mind and body, do hereby make my last—' Here it's so mouldy," said Bob, breakin off short, "that I can't see the letters for a little bit, and then come's 'testament.'"

"Go on," said the governor, listenin with

the ears of a lady's-maid for the knocks and rings on St. Valentine's mornin.

“ ‘I do hereby give,’ ” continued Bob, “ and then comes two bless-ed hard words I can't make nothin' of, ‘to my dutiful son Sam Soaker and the heirs of his body——’ ”

“Hairs of his body!” exclaimed my mother. “Come, come, that must be wrong. Try back, Bobby.”

“I tell ye, ‘it's heirs of his body,’ ” continued Bob, redin, “ ‘whether male or female——’ ”

“I shall bust a-larfin,” interrupted mother, “I know I shall, Thomas. Female hairs! Ha, ha, ha!” and then she roared away like a blazin calf.

“Go on,” said the governor; “never mind that old horse marine. She'd grin at a funeral if so be she was in a ticklish humour.”

“No, I wouldn't, Thomas,” replied my mother, suddenly bottling up her laugh, and lookin very grave, “no, I wouldn't, Thomas;

so don't go for to say any evil things of your lawful wedded wife."

"Shut up, old ooman," rejoined the governor, "shut up, old dear. Go on, Bob," continued he.

" 'And their issue,' " said Bob, a-readin on—" 'and their issue !' I wonder what that means ?"

"Can't say," replied the governor. "It's all gibberish to me ; but rattle on, we may find a cranny of light by-an-by."

" 'And their issue,' " repeated Bob, " 'ex—cutors, ad——' " Here Bob bungled " 'ad—' somethin or other, 'and ass—igneess.' "

"Ass an knees !" exclaimed my father. "Blue blazes ! if a chap swaps his ass away, in course his knees follow in the bargain."

"It's all a parcel o' trash," said mother.

"I'm not so sure o' that," replied the governor, "although it's of the queer-school kind."

"There's a lot more here," said Bob, "that

I can't make out, the letters are so pale and worn."

"Skip all you can't make out," rejoined the governor, "and let's hear what you can."

"'To Susan Soaker,'" read Bob, "'I give de—' somethin, 'and be—queath five thousand pounds three per cent. consols as a legacy.'"

"As a leg I see!" repeated my mother. "Pooh, pooh! it's all chaff, Thomas; it's all chaff, I tell ye."

"No, but it isn't," replied the governor, with a leary look. "I know all about it now. Ha, ha!" and he rubbed his hands with as much delight as though they were just about a grabbin hold of another heap o' silver.

"What is it all about?" inquired Bob, surprised at the governor's knowledge goin ahead of his learnin.

"It's what's called a will," replied my father, "which folks with money leave, to say how it is to be divided when they become cat's-meat."

"Lor, Thomas, you don't say so!" said my mother, lookin at the piece of parchment with very different eyes.

"That's what it is, old dear," returned the governor, "and I shouldn't wonder——" and, stopping short, he dived both hands into his breeches-pockets, stretched out his legs, and commenced a whistlin like a cock-black-bird on the first of May.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed my mother. "How you do take on Thomas, to be sure! What shouldn't you wonder?"

"No matter," replied the governor; "it's the silent sow that picks up the acorns."

"But the squallin pig has a right to his whack," rejoined Bob. "And as I've acted that part for your advantage, Mr. Hogg, I should like to know whether or no I'm not to go snacks in the benefit."

"Oh! yes," said the governor, jeeringly, "certainly. Would you like it in small change, Bob, or large?"

“As to that, I’m not partickler,” replied Bob, sulkily. “But I see how it is — you, like a good many of our neighbours who get hold o’ me to read the papers for ’em over their pipes and backy, use a feller’s learnin just as long as the tune suits, an then ye forget to pay the fiddler.”

“No, no, Bob,” rejoined the governor, who was as chicken-hearted a cove as was ever called tender, provided he was touched on the raw. “Don’t say so, Bob. I admire your learnin, but not your hoggishness. Never be in a hurry to snatch at nothin; it’ll save you a vast deal of trouble. I fancy a benefit *may* come out o’ this old rag of parchment, but it don’t follow that it *should*. However, if so be it does, you shan’t have reason to say, Bob, I took advantage of your learnin; but as large a morsel as comes to your share shall be put into your wallet as pleasantly as mine into my own.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MUDLARK CONTINUED.

The next day, (said John Hogg)—and as nasty a one it was, I remember, as could be well wished for by the greatest umbrella-maker in London — the governor and me tramped along the Strand towards the Temple. There was a fat, yellor fog hangin upon every thing and every one, with a thick, drizzlin rain a-spurtin into your eyes, so cold and chilly that even we mudlarks grumbled at it. A deep fall of snow layin on the ground, so mixed up with the slush that you couldn't see any difference between one and the other, was chokin up all the drains and gutters, and

floodin the streets with mire ; and nothin looked anyways comfortable and happy but the baked taters and roasted apples a-sizzlin here and there on the charcoal-fires at the corners of the streets.

As we turned down the Middle Temple Lane, there was a queer-lookin, little, ugly old man a-standin under the gateway, with his hands croodled under the tiniest white apron round his middle I ever saw in my life. He seemed very weedy in all respects. His thatch was battered and crushed, and the choker twisted about his neck was stale and grimy ; while the collar of the coat which rubbed against it had got notice to quit some years since, only some long zigzag stitches held on to the shoulders, in defiance of old age and hard work. His face was thin, sharp, and white, exceptin his nose, and that beat Melancholy Joey's holler, for a pinky seed. A more red-hot, fiery pimple I never clapped eyes on. There he stood, poor little varmin,

like a fly in winter, not knowin how to keep hisself any ways warm. The miserable toad stamped his feet on the paved stones, and danced a yard or two up an down, and blew the steam out of his jaws like a locomotive with the biler bust.

“Do you know any lawyers a-living about here?” inquired the governor.

The little man stared as if he was struck comical all in a moment.

“Do I know any lawyers a-livin about here!” repeated he. “Ha, ha, ha! here’s a go!”

“Can’t ye give a civil answer?” returned the governor, with his hackles a brislin up.

“Oh, yes, certainly,” replied the little man.

“Then give it,” rejoined my father. “Do you know any lawyers a-livin about here, I ask?”

“Three thousand five hundred, and upwards,” said the little man, a-grinnin.

“That’s enough, and even a few more than

I want," added the governor. "But can ye recommend me to one as a gentleman of respectability?" continued he.

"They're all gentlemen," replied the little man, "every one on 'em, by act of parliament. Third and fourth of George the Second, chapter the sixth, I think it is. And as to *respectability* — let any body who's got any tin say one of the whole lot *isn't* respectable, that's all. I wouldn't ask the devil to put his foot in a prettier fix."

"Well! but there must be some better than others in such a drove as you know?" observed the governor.

"I used to think so," said the little man, "when I first became ticket-porter here forty year ago; but if ye'd seen the flocks of clients that I have go out o' this place *at last*, you'd change your opinion. When they come first, they look as if they can chink their guineas in their pockets. Then very soon there's something that tells me they're eased of that music.

After that they drop their heads and walk fast, so that you mayn't see the darns in their tog-gery, and the cracks in their shoes. And then you lose 'em altogether. No," continued the little man, shakin his head, "it's one and the same thing whether they go to the ground-floors or to the garrets — all leave, at last, lookin old and wrinkled, poor and heart-broken."

"I think I'd better not go to any of 'em, Jack?" observed the governor.

"Never turn tail," replied I. "You've faced many a rat, father; don't turn funky at a lawyer."

"Have ye any thing to lose?" asked the little man.

"Not the fag-end of nothin," replied the governor.

"Then you run no danger," returned the little man. "And if so be there's a chance of a gain, have a pitch for it."

“So I will,” returned the governor. “Now just tell us who the dodger is I’d best go to, and then I’ll stand a quartern with the last precious tizzy I’ve got in the world.”

“It signifies scarcely a farthin, to my mind,” replied the little man, “which you pick out. But the office that employs me most to go of errands is Messrs. Drive, Screwem, Snap, and Pinchem, and I think they’ll do as well as any—that is, for themselves.”

“To them I’ll go, then,” said my father. “Where do they live?”

“In King’s Bench Walk,” replied the little man. “But I’ll show you the office, and wait outside to drink your health when you’ve done with them.”

Followin his directions, we knocked at a black door, and, to the order of “Come in,” we trudged into a sort o’ room where six or seven fellers was a-writin at a shopboard, railed off like so many monkeys in a wildbeast wan.

“Well, *sir*!” said one o’ the chaps, takin a

pinch of snuff very slowly from a box before him, "what do *you* want?"

"One o' your masters, I expect," replied the governor, "as it's a gentleman I'm to see."

"Demmit, Archibald," said another of the young cobblers, "that was catchin a tartar, that was;" and then the rest of Mr. Archibald's pals laughed very much, with their mouths muffled in all their pocket-wipes.

"Come, you sir," returned Mr. Archibald, all in a froth at being made sport of, "what or who do you want?"

"Either one of the cocks o' the walk will do," replied the governor.

"Cocks of the walk!" repeated the young chap. "The partners of our firm, feller, are not to be insulted in the presence of their clerks."

"Who wants to assault your partners," said the governor, "or any other of your relations, I should like to know?"

"Nonsense, nonsense, Archibald," observed somebody opposite. "Mr. Snap's in the next room; there'll be a row directly. Leave the man to me."

"Well, Johnson, well!" replied Mr. Archibald, as tame as the lions men fight with at the playhouses, "as you please;" and takin up his pen he commenced a-diggin away like a Trojan.

"Now, my good man," said the one called Johnson, gettin off a high stool, and comin outside the den, "who do you require?"

"I don't know who," replied the governor, "in partickler."

"Is it the common law, criminal, or chancery partner you want?" asked the clerk.

"My business is with the last-named cove, no doubt," returned the governor, "for it's all chance work I come about, and no mistake."

"Is Mr. Pinchem disengaged?" inquired the clerk.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then follow me," said he; and, leading us across a short passage, he stopped at an old green baize door, and, in a whisper, asked my father his name.

The governor gave it; and Mr. Johnson, swingin open the door, halloood "Mr. Hogg, sir," and turnin round left us.

It was the first time I'd ever heard father called a mister, and it sounded so queer and ticklish to my ears.

In a high-back, leather chair, sat a tall, thin gentleman in black, readin a reg'lar truss o' paper, with a table before him loaded with scores of bundles, all wisped up with little bits of pink string for waistbands. Every chair, except two which were stuck in the middle of the room, was cram full o' dirty heaps of the like fodder, and all round was a lot o' boxes lookin like so many corn-bins; and plastered against the walls was more books than a regiment of soldiers would get through in seven year.

“Your servant, sir,” said the governor, after waitin a minute or two for the gentleman to open the ball; and then, but not till then, the old codger seemed to be aware that there was somebody present beside hisself.

“Eh? oh! ah!” exclaimed he, liftin his eyes from the bundle, and fixin ’em upon us, and his finger half pointed, as if by custom, to the chairs in the middle of the room; but seein such queer customers, I suppose, he drew it back again, and nodded his head, as much as to say “go on.”

The governor then up and told him who and what he was, and all about the concern; and when he came to that part o’ the road about a-finding o’ the paper, the old codger grinned and “He! he!’d” as though he was lookin at Punch an Judy, or Lord Mayor’s show.

“You’re somethin more than a *common* mudlark?” said he; “not of a gregarious tribe, I’ll be sworn?”

“I know little or nothin of my tribe, sir,”

replied the governor. "Indeed, my pedigree is soon told. I was a infant picked out o' the kennel in Drury Lane, and papped and suckled in the parish workouse."

"Your ærie was not then in the cedar-top," rejoined the lawyer, cackling like an old hen. "But go on, my friend, I like your errand."

"I've only to say, sir," added the governor, "that thinkin somethin might turn up out o' the business, I thought I'd better go to a lawyer with the paper just as I picked it up; and here it is," said he, draggin it from his pocket.

"A very judicious decision," replied Mr. Pinchem. "And these are the weights," continued he, admirin them as if they were made of gold, and then, spreadin open the parchment, he ran his eyes over it at about the sharpest pace they could well travel at. "A novel, safe, and doubtlessly a well-considered plan for getting rid of an unfavourable will," observed he; "but it is not one that I should

have recommended. A fire would have been found more conclusive."

"Then you think with me, sir," said the governor, "that it was lost on purpose?"

"There can be but one opinion—that is to say, one *sagacious* opinion—upon the subject," replied the lawyer.

"And that is——"

"Yours," interrupted Mr. Pinchem, putting his mouth to a tin pipe, and callin out "Johnson" through it.

In a few seconds the clerk came who opened the door; and, as he entered, his master said, in as civil a voice as if he was a-speaking to a real gentleman, "Pray don't stand, Mr. Hogg; be seated, I beg."

How that Johnson did gape with his eyes, to be sure! I never saw a feller so queered, as the governor and me dropped ourselves, for the first time in our lives, on a soft-bottomed chair. What a treat that was, to be sure! I couldn't help a-thinkin the seats in the other

and better world, as I heard a parson talk about once or twice, must have the same sort of bottoms for folks to sit in and sing for ever. One would require a well-stuffed chair, gents, for such a sitivation.

“Johnson,” said Mr. Pinchem.

“Sir,” returned the clerk, bowin, and lookin such a different Johnson to what he did when comin the bumptious in the other room.

“Extract the particulars of this will—such as the name of the testator, heirs, executors, devisees, legatees, sums, dates, description of property, and so on, and form the whole into an advertisement for every morning and evening paper that’s printed,” said Mr. Pinchem, “referring any person or persons benefitting under the will to our firm, as they will hear of something to their advantage. Do you understand me?” inquired his master.

“Quite so, sir,” replied the clerk, scrapin his nose to the floor.

"This is the readiest mode of discovering the parties we want," observed Mr. Pinchem to the governor. "We might be months in search of them, perhaps, in vain, by trying to hunt them out."

"You know best, sir," returned the governor. "All I want is ——."

"Yes, yes, to be sure you do," interrupted Mr. Pinchem. "That will do, Johnson; leave the room. What you would say," continued the lawyer, smiling, "is to do the best you can for yourself."

"I don't want the lion's share," replied the governor, "nor the ass's. All I want is my reg'lars."

"And you shall have them," replied Mr. Pinchem; "if I understand the meaning by your share of the profits."

"Swag, we call it," said the governor.

"Swag, then," added the lawyer, "if there be any."

"All's right, then," returned the governor,

“for I can’t help thinkin we shall pick up somethin’ worth sacking.”

“If I thought otherwise,” added Mr. Pinchem, “I should not commence proceedings by an outlay of ten or twelve pounds.”

We then left Mr. Pinchem’s room with an order from him to give our address to the clerks, and, as we did so, never were fellers so altered in their manners. Just as we were goin out o’ the office, Mr. Pinchem popped his head out of the green baize door, and said, “Let me see you the day after to-morrow, at three o’clock, Mr. Hogg.”

“It will be ebb-tide, sir, then,” replied the governor, “and I shall be on the mud along the Surrey shore at that hour.”

“It will be better for you to be here,” rejoined Mr. Pinchem.

“I’ll do so, sir, then,” added the governor; “for,” said he, after we had left the place, “he may advance a trifle, Jack, on the chance of the swag.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MUDDLARK CONTINUED.

It might be about a week after our first goin to Mr. Pinchem's, and we began to fear the swag was more in the eye than the pocket, when the governor had a message one night to be at the lawyer's by eleven the followin day. Our brace and a half of hearts, mother's, the governor's, and mine, went pit-a-pat at this news, and all chirped our expectations of what was goin to come out o' the business, like cock sparrows selectin bopeep oats in the road on a frosty mornin.

"Now, Thomas, my dear," said my mother, always a-head of spendin beforehand, "what shall we buy? There's our blessed boy hasn't a complete shirt to his back, nor a sound seat

to his trowsers; supposin we tog him out in a bran span new suit. Wouldn't the neighbours feel a little jealous, that's all!"

"Lay on yer oars a-bit, old ooman," replied the governor. "Go and fetch us a quart of ale, and two pound of chuck stakes for supper," continued he.

"And where's the money to come from?" inquired my mother.

"Can't say," returned the governor. "But, since you began to talk about coverin Jack's body, I thought we'd better commence by linin it."

"I meant after the shiners was got," added my mother, droppin her cheery tone, when she thought of 'em as things to come.

"Then it will be time enough to talk of gettin rid of the brads," said the governor, "and I warrant me they'll slip away nineteen to the dozen, if they reach your fists."

I didn't go with the governor the next mornin, on account of the air-holes in my

toggery ; but when he came back I and mother was a-standin at the corner of the alley to meet him. Lor ! how he was marchin along ! No soldier ever held his chin higher over his stiff shiny stock, than he did over his old flabby ogle, and puttin one leg afore the other as far as it would go, he looked like a twopenny postman a *leetle* too late.

“ Look, Thomas, stop, here we are,” said mother, as he slapped clean past, without so much as turnin his eyes upon us.

“ Why, what’s the matter ?” said mother, pipin her eye, and takin up the corner of her chequed apron to mop up a tear that filled it. But the governor kept on, and gave no reply.

“ He’s cut his wife, and a-goin to desert his lawful babby,” sobbed she, as we trudged after him into the house.

But when we got there the governor seemed in no such cruel humour. Stretched at full length — that is, as far as he could in a room not so long as hisself by some inches — there

he was upon the bed, rollin upon his back in such a fit of larfin, that I thought he'd a-bust. He was almost black in the face, and kept a-haw hawin all the same as though he was going it for a wager.

"Lift him up, Jack," said mother; "he'll split like a overbaked tater. Lift him up, while I punch his nose."

"Punch my nose!" exclaimed the governor, comin to a full stop in his roar. "Why, what do you mean, old ooman?"

"One opposite shoves out another opposite, don't it?" replied mother. "When a house is a-fire, they pump water upon the flames. When we're tired a-walkin we sit still. When we're down in the mouth, we get up the spirits by pourin down the max — provided we can get any. And, by the same rule, when we've got too much laugh in us, the best and quickest cure is a punch on the nose."

"That sort of punch," returned the governor, "is a sort of liquor that wouldn't suit

my palate. However, old dear," continued he, "I'll just let you into the secret, and then you'll have cause to laugh on the right side of *your* mouth. But, first of all, guess why I wouldn't so much as look at you and Jack as I came up the alley."

"Can't for the life of me," replied mother.

"I was too proud," returned the governor, "I was, indeed. For the first time in my life I felt ashamed of my wife and son."

"And why, pray?" said mother, a-bridlin up.

"Listen," replied the governor. "When a man gets suddenly above himself, like a boy on stilts, he often overlooks the means by which he rises, and the pals he left on the ground."

"Ah, ah!" said I, seein the governor's drift. "But, if so be he gets a cropper, don't all of 'em hooray a few, and mangle him with all their precious might?"

"And sarve him right," returned the governor; "and sarve him right. But you'll

hardly believe that I was touched with a flavour of this kidney a few minutes since."

"*You!*" exclaimed my mother.

"Ay," replied the governor, "me. I was a-buildin such beautiful sorts of things in my eye, and had come to a one-oss chay, with a flunky in green and yeller sittin along side of me, when every crumb o' the raisin went splush to the ground, at seein you and Jack at the corner of the alley."

"And what business had you to plant such fiddle-faddles in your head?" asked mother.

"Because," returned the governor, tryin to look grave as a quaker courtin, but a larf a-smokin up notwithstanding, "because I'm a slap-up man of fortune—an out-and-out cove of independent means," continued he, divin his hand into a pocket and bringin out a ten-pound flimsey. "There, what do ye think o' that for a plaster to a poor man's holy pocket?"

"I — really — feel," gasped mother, "a

little queer or so, Thomas. A sort—of—all overishness—as if—I couldn't tell how."

"Never mind, old ooman," added the governor; "you'll get over those willy-wabbles presently."

"Do tell us all about the way you've got the fortune, father," said I, skippin about like a young bear on hot tiles.

"I'll just think for a minute or two of every thing that's passed to-day, Jack," replied the governor. "In the mean time, go and fetch a quart of Barclay and Perkins's to clear the pipes with, for I just feel as if a parcel of spiders had been spinnin in my throat for a week."

Doing as I was bid, the governor tossed off the whole at a swig, not so much as givin a "hah!" as he came to the bottom.

"Now, old dear," said he, "I'll tell ye all about the best day's work that ever fell to our lot."

"Do, Thomas," replied my mother, "for

I feel as though I was a-sitting on pins, points up."

' When I got to the lawyer's crib this mornin'," began the governor, after a few hems and h-hums, " I was taken straight into Mr. Pinchem, although there was a lot of white-shirted chaps waitin to see him afore me.

" ' Good mornin, Mr. Hogg,' said he, as though I was a prince of the blood; ' take a chair, I beseech you.'

" ' Thank ye, sir,' replied I. ' What's the luck?'

" ' He, he ! my dear sir,' replied he, ' there's something in the trap at last.'

" ' Is there really?' returned I. ' And what kind of a bird may it be?'

" ' One that'll bear plucking with the patience of a live goose,' rejoined he. ' A young, lovely, and—ha, ha, ha ! I can't help laughing,' continued the lawyer, ' they're always so pliant—lovely and penniless woman.'

“ ‘ And who may she be, sir ? ’ asked I.

“ ‘ We shall have her here again presently,’ replied Mr. Pinchem, lookin at his ticker ; ‘ but she was so very desirous of seeing her husband set at liberty, that I couldn’t keep her a moment after I offered to advance the funds.’

“ ‘ Perhaps, sir,’ said I, ‘ you’ll just let me hear the particulars of the business, as I don’t understand what you’re a-talkin about.’

“ ‘ To be sure—to be sure,’ returned the lawyer ; ‘ for you’re not the least interested of the number concerned, and the circumstances are soon narrated,’ continued he. ‘ The day before yesterday I received a communication in answer to the advertisement I so generally published, and upon immediate inquiry and industrious search, I became acquainted with these true but singular coincidences :—

“ ‘ Some seven years ago, there was a

special pleader of eminence living in Elm Court, and, I believe, from close application to his profession, he was very seldom out of it. His habits were solitary in the extreme, no one but the laundress and the lawyer's clerks ever being seen to cross the threshold of his chambers. So time went on, and the pleader continued to amass wealth and to grow older. He became decrepid and almost bedridden, when the woman who attended upon him became the mother of a female child, and he the putative father.

“Whether it was the first object that waked the dormant affections within him is uncertain, but this child became an absorbing idol, a creature that he lived but to love. From her earliest infancy he could not bear her to be from his sight; and thus he continued, until she was a pretty maiden of seventeen, a fond and doating parent. Knowing that money was the very blood of existence, he insisted upon being propped up

in his couch to work, as he said, as long as his heart throbbed, so that his child might become rich and happy. Often would he read his own will to her and to her mother, and chuckle over the great wealth he should leave for their benefit.

“ ‘ Ianthe — he would say — your fortune, which has rather gathered than been gleaned, will command a lord to kneel for favour when I’m gone.

“ ‘ But the old gentleman was much out in his calculation. Ianthe, instead of commanding a lord, accepted the offer of the hand and — as a matter of course — the heart of his own poor and forgotten clerk. Like the majority of young and ardent lovers, they possessed not the tithe of a grain of discretion, nor the shadow of a moment of patience. Without consulting any body or any thing, save their own inclinations, they hurried off early one inauspicious morning, and became man and wife.

“ ‘ With curses loud and deep, the lawyer

received the unwelcome intelligence from the lips of his own child. Neither tears nor entreaties availed. Terrible hate and revenge took the place of deeply-rooted affection. Driving her from his presence, in a fit of ungovernable passion, he swore never to see her again, nor to forgive her: and, indeed, he never had the chance, for the following morning he was discovered in bed, a distorted and inanimate corpse.

“ ‘ Search was immediately made for the will, which had been so frequently read to Ianthe that she almost knew the contents; but, notwithstanding the most diligent inquiry, no trace could be discovered of it. Rewards were offered in vain, and in consequence of the indispensable ceremony having been neglected to render the next of kin legitimate heir to the supposed intestate estate, Ianthe was left without a shilling. The heir-at-law seized upon the entire property, and thus, instead of riches, gaunt

poverty tracked the heels of the newly-wedded pair. From one step of misery they passed to another lower in the scale, until the husband found himself within the walls of a low debtor's prison, for the mite, more begged than borrowed, that meanly contributed to his daily subsistence.

“ ‘ Thus matters remained with them until they were informed by some accidental circumstance of the advertisement. In one interview, I was satisfied with Ianthe's well-founded claim. A letter to the heir-at-law, accompanied with a copy of the will, has convinced him of the futility of disputing it. To-day I have advanced the requisite sum to free the husband from prison, and by this day week, we shall be in absolute possession of every brick and every guinea.’ ”

“ ‘ And a very pleasant way of a-windin up the business,’ observed I.

“ ‘ Very much so, indeed,’ replied Mr. Pinchem. ‘ I sent for you to-day,’ conti-

nued he, 'in accordance with the wish of the lady, that she might thank you personally for the discovery, and to make a provision for you as long as you live, in any way best suited to your inclination.'

" 'Well, sir!' said I, struck all of a heap with comfort, 'I'm as pleased as any body that things have turned up such trumps. And, as to the stumpy, I shall leave that to the lady herself.'

" 'Shall I give you my advice what to do?' said the lawyer.

" 'I shall feel obleeged to ye, sir,' replied I; 'for I feel in a quan-dary as to what to ask for.'

" 'Have a guinea a-week settled on you and your wife for life, with a bonus of ten pounds down to commence with,' rejoined Mr. Pinchem.

" 'Lor, sir!' returned I, 'she'll never stand that much.'

" 'But she will,' said the lawyer. 'It's all

left to me ; and, if you say that you're satisfied, here's the money,' continued he, holding out the flimsy.

"I didn't say a word until I'd got the money between my fingers, for I thought he might be cookin my goose for me ; but, when I got it safe and snug, said I— ' Many thanks, sir, for your advice ; I'll do exactly as you tell me.'

" ' Then come here every Monday, and you will find a pound for you without the trouble of asking for it,' rejoined Mr. Pinchem.

"Just as he had done talkin, in came two youngish persons, a male and female. The young woman, directly she clapped eyes on me, rushed forwards, and, catchin me in her arms, was, I think, a very good mind to kiss me ; and, I believe, would, if so be I'd happened to have shaved this mornin.

" ' God bless you and yours!' she exclaimed, while two of the biggest tears I ever saw trickled down her cheeks. ' God bless you!'

but she couldn't say any more. The words seemed just like so much stick-jaw puddin.

“ ‘ Perhaps,’ observed Mr. Pinchem, ‘ it will be better for you to leave us now, Mr. Hogg. My client is rather excited, and we have affairs of importance to discuss.’ ”

“ ‘ Certainly, sir,’ said I, ‘ if it'll be more agreeable.’ And, after some friendly shakes of the mauleys all round, I left 'em with a promise to call again in a few days, to receive, as the lady called it, ‘ something more as a substantial proof of her gratitude.’ ”

When the governor ceased spinnin his yarn, mother, who had been as silent as a heathen mummy all along, shouted out—“ Who'd a-thought it ! I'm a lady at last ! ” and fell to a-kissin father as though he was a little pukin babby.

“ That'll do, that'll do, old ooman,” returned he. “ Don't buss me into a fluid ; but go and bring in a supper fit for a king. Won't we live ; that's all ! ”

“Like Christmas turkeys,” replied mother, “all the year round. Blest if we don’t make Jack, too, the fattest boy in this or any other alley!”

And they did, gents, (said one-eyed Jack,) until I was so precious fat that all the neighbours called me little Lardy. At last I became wider than I was long, and looked like a firkin of butter on a couple of hat-pegs.

Four years slipped away, and father received his allowance as reg’lar as the day came. Of course he never did another stroke of work with such a handsome income, and both mother and I followed his steps to the nicest partickler.

I believe it was never exactly known how the will got into the sewer; but there can be little doubt that the old, red-hot father threw it there on the morning of his daughter’s marriage. And this, Mr. Wirkem, sir, is nearly all I’ve got to say concernin the family fortune of the Hoggs.

The governor eat and drank like a Hampshire porker, until he became unable to bear his own weight, and mother was a little less of a shavin thinner, when one mornin he called me to the side of the bed, where he'd been a-puffin and groanin for breath for a week, and said—

“ Jack, I'm suet, you may depend on't.”

“ Don't say so, father,” replied I, a-whimperin.

“ Leave off piping your eye, my boy,” returned he. “ All flesh is hay. That is to say, Jack, we must all come to be truss'd up at last.”

“ I hope you won't be just yet,” rejoined I.

“ Time's up, my son, nearly,” added the governor. “ I feel that the wind is all but out of my sails, and so—so—so pay—attention—to—my—last words.”

“ I will, father,” sobbed I.

“ Take care of—your mother,” returned he, with difficulty, “ and don't eat *meat suppers*.”

These were the last words of my poor father, (said John Hogg,) shaking his head pathetically at the remembrance of one who, to him, was "the glass of fashion and the mould of form."

My mother followed in his wake within six months, (continued he,) and then — (a gurgling sound was heard to rattle in his throat, immediately followed by a pearly drop stealing from his moistened eye) — and then—I had to get my own grub.

John Hogg received the thanks of the company for his family history, and the President added the honour of proposing his health, which met with a ready response from every individual present.

"And now, gentlemen," observed Mr. Wirkem, "we can just keep the time to a second. Hark! there's the hour that bids us say good-night."

CHAPTER XV.

There is not in wide London a courtyard so neat
 As that court* in whose precincts the R. D. C. † meet.
 How great is the throng when the coaches depart!
 Whilst Macdonald is leading—so good at a start.

Yet it was not that Chesterfield gave to our view
 His fastest of steppers, and deepest of blue ‡;
 Not the workman-like “turn-out” of Alford so pat,
 The leaders of Suffield! the wheelers of Bat! §

’Twas that cattle such goers as Peyton ne’er held,
 Were driven by whips, scarce by Beaufort excell’d;
 Frank Copeland is springing his four on the road,
 And Paine’s hospitality’s told by his load!

• The court of Chesterfield House, where the R. D. C.
 meet.

† R. D. C., the Richmond Driving Club.

‡ Vide the peculiar colour of my Lord Chesterfield’s
 equipages.

§ Short, (by poetical licence,) for Bathyany.

In this fam'd driving Club it were endless to trace
All the notable coachmen, the ribbons who grace;
Since Waterford, Paget, and Pitt, swell the stream,
And the eye dwells delighted on every team.

In Richmond's sweet hamlet how choice the white bait!
Though Topham's * champagne sometimes makes our
fours, eight!

Now let each thirsty soul, as the goblet he drains,
Drink the President's † health—may he long hold the
reins!

“Neat, Jacob, neat—very neat,” said Mr. Wirkem, as Jacob Plywel concluded his song. “I love those little kind of ditties,” continued he, “which come home to one's feelings as naturally and pleasantly as a carpet-shoe to a gouty toe.”

“It wasn't a gaudy exhibition,” remarked the Vice-President, “but what I may call an elegant kind of a drag.”

“Elegance!” returned Mr. Wirkem, clearing his mouth from a dark and thick cloud,

* The proprietor of the excellent hotel at Richmond.

† President, the Earl of Chesterfield.

“elegance generally consists in things being packed in their proper places. Out of them it is impossible they should appear otherwise than a dancing-master on a couple of crutches—damned awkward. Take, for example, the handsomest bird that swims. Look at a swan, with her arched neck and snowy plume, gliding down the Thames on a summer evening; she’s a picture then and there. But put her to crop the garbage, and waddle in the kennel, what an ungainly sight she would make, to be sure! and why? because she’d be out of her element. The same rule applies to those little magpies, the women. Nothing earthly is so handsome to my mind as a woman on her right box. Look at a young pretty dear, sitting before a crackling fire of a frosty night, nestling a round fat babby to her buzzum, with both ears thrown back for the footfall of her husband; one eye on the dial of the old clock that’s been tick-tacking slower and slower until the hands seem at a

stand-still, and the other peeping between the flannel folds that warm the sleeping sucking chip of a dragsman. There's a sight for ye, gentlemen."

"Domestic, certainly," observed Jacob Plywel.

"Then to see the blood rush to her cheek, and her eyes to sparkle like frozen snow in the sun, when she hears the well-known tread," continued the old coachman; "it's surprisingly beautiful. Down goes the plump little bundle into a rocker close at hand, and with just one kick to set it going, away she springs to the door, and before he can press a finger on the latch, open it swings, and then there's a little squeak of delight, and such kissing and hugging, enough to melt a looker on!"

"Come, come, Dick!" observed Tom Short, expostulatory, "one would suppose you were a sort of agent for the Matrimonial Alliance Company."

"Then she untwines the chokers and comforters," added the old coachman, without noticing the remark, "unshells the capes and wrappers, draws a stuffed-bottomed chair straight before the fire, sees him into it, warms his slippers, dives into a cupboard for a bottle of cherry-bounce, hands him a fat-bodied glass, fills him a brimmer by way of a sharpener, watches every drop as it slips down his throat, and then sets about frying the sassengers, or broiling the steaks. There's a picture of earthly bliss, my boys, ay, and of elegance into the bargain!" said the President, slapping the capacious calf of his crossed dexter leg.

"Heaven in a cockloft!" observed John Hogg, enthusiastically, "Heaven in a cockloft, Mr. Wirkem, sir?"

"But to see one with her features all cramped up with bad temper," added the old coachman, "her tongue wagging like the clapper of a sheep-bell, ready to kick at her

own shadow, and nagging at her husband with all the venom of a hissing snake, is quite a contrary picture. Then it is," continued the President, "she's as much out of her element as the swan in the kennel, and looks just as out of place; and then, if you want to know what 'elegance' *isn't*, that's it."

"Very true, Dick Wirkem, very true," replied the Vice-President, while a reminiscence of his better half's elocutionary powers of detailing the errors of his faulty existence became vividly alive to his imagination.

"But supposing it's the husband's fault that the old woman tips him the lecture-rag," observed Jacob Plywel.

"There can be no more justification for a wife's nagging," returned the old coachman, "than for a horse's jibbing. I don't mean to say that a woman isn't to speak her mind; but there's a *way* of doing of it, Jacob. The time, the opportunity, should be studied, if she wants to do any good by the move, and

if she doesn't it ought not to be made at all. A man generally has enough rubs in his road to upset his comforts, without the addition of a scolding wife at home; and, although I am no advocate for runaways in any form or shape, still, if there be one cause more justifiable than another for a clean bolt, it is from a nagging wife."

"I perfectly agree with you, Dick Wirkem," returned the Vice-President, shaking himself like a cock about to crow.

"At the same time," added the old coachman, perceiving the feeling he had, perchance, inspired in his companion opposite, "few but what would be stopped with bruised hocks and broken knees. Better to cram cotton in the ears, and stick to the stall. I never heard of a chap bettering his condition by bolting."

"And never will," rejoined Tom Short. "But come," continued he, "we're letting the night slip away without our usual call.

John Hogg, it's your turn to mark the porker."

"I know it be," replied one-eyed Jack, "and please God I'll dock the right un. Now, Toddy, my nightingale, boil us up a gallop. I know you'll not disgrace yerself, so pipe away."

"A good choice, indeed," observed the President.

"You're a gentleman to say so," returned Toddy, flattered by the approval. "I've a good mind," added he, appealing to his friend Jack, "to give 'em a little of *my* private history, as you did, John."

"Do," responded Jack, "if so be there's any thing in it."

"That I'll leave ye to judge of when I've finished the stage," returned Toddy.

"Well said," added the President; "now to the test."

Toddy moistened his whistle, and then commenced.

TODDY'S TALE.

It follows in the nater of things that I *had* a father, (said he,) but I don't remember a male parent from the hour of being a little pup to this, and never so much as ever heard him mentioned. P'raps mother was doubtful as to my exact pedigree in this respect, for when I asked her once who was my sire, she said, "it was a wise child as knowed its own father, and as I was a little fool, *in course* I couldn't know." After this cream-o'-tartar answer I never troubled my head about the matter.

Mother was a very fine woman, gents, that is to say, she was about the tallest and fattest I ever clapped eyes on. Her eyes were buried in her cheeks, and as for her chin it wagged as she walked. She had no, what may be called, middle. From her top to her foundation she was all one size, like an old po'chaise; and a more jolly-looking dame a chap couldn't hope to be nuss'd by or papp'd. We lived in

a court running out of Whitechapel, not far from the church, called Saucepan Alley, where all sorts of people got their living in all sorts of ways. There was a shop without a front, with a female black doll, scragged by the neck, for a sign, and swaddled up in wery dingy linen. It was called a rag-shop; but all the neighbours knew it was a crib to melt the swag, and share the reg'lars in.

"And pray what may that be?" inquired Mr. Wirkem.

"A receiving-place for stolen goods, Dick," replied the Vice-President.

Then there was a broker's, (resumed Toddy,) full of poor folks' furniture, grabbed for rent, rates, and taxes. A fishmonger, so called, who dealt only in oysters, red-herrings, and oranges. A laundress, sweep, and dust-man. A Welch milkman, who made his own milk, for nobody ever heard of his cow. Two apple-stalls at one end of the court, and one tater-stand at the other, with a tripe-shop

just opposite. Underneath the cow-heel and trotters, in a sort of box called a stall, a cobbler hammered to live; and next door to him was a dealer in cats-meat and sausages. There was a cook's-shop, and very savoury prog they used to turn up, although it might be of the doubtful gender; also, a dealer in old clothes, a bird-catcher's, and an undertaker's, in a small way. Mother kept a mangle, (continued Toddy,) but the mangle didn't keep her. Ha, ha, ha! it was a blind, gents, the mangle was. The sly old creetur used to make me sometimes give it a grind, just for appearance-sake, that the neighbours might hear it rumble, but there never was so much as a rag under the roller. Whenever a basket of linen was offered, she used to say she was full of work, and couldn't take another bit at any price; but she was too much of a lady to work. Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!—her real trade, gents, was living on people's *lap-dogs*!

“Living on people’s lapdogs!” repeated the President, in a tone of much surprise.

Yes, (replied Toddy,) and a very good living it was, and no mistake. When she was out of the article, this was her plan. Of a morning, when the sun was warm and bright, she’d put on a nice white apron, a shawl, straw-bonnet, and all the other traps to correspond, and, with a large market-basket in one hand, and a door-key in the other, take herself to the neighbourhood of the Regent’s Park, or some other place where the old sedags, or, as some people call ’em, old maids lead their fat, waddling, pet dogs a walk. Mother’s respectable appearance lulled all suspicion of her manoeuvres, and so her opportunities were greater for the business.

Toddy paused and sipped his grog, and, after drawing the back of his hand across his lips, recommenced his narrative.

A corner, gents, was the spot for mother’s pickings up (said he). How I have seen her

dodge a fat spaniel from pillar to post, just like a martin after a Mayfly ! And, just when the unsuspecting animal has been looking at the bottom of a curbstone, and trying whether it had any partick'ler scent or not, up she'd whip him, and into the basket he'd go quicker than it takes me to tell it. Then off she'd walk, as if nothing had happened ; and while the owner, for the most part some old lady or other, was a-calling and looking about distracted for the little beast, mother would be pointing homewards, and calculating the reward that was sure to be offered for its recovery within a very few hours. In the course of a year, I've known her to prig as many as fifty of these dogs ; and, as she never got less than from one pound to two for each, it proved a profitable kind of occupation for a forlorn and helpless woman with one fatherless infant. It was part of my business to feed the collection, which was kept in a cellar well removed from all intruders, and to take home

those that were advertised, and receive the money. On those occasions I was polished off like mother's copper coffee-pot on Saturdays. Face soaped and lathered till it shone like wax; hair greased and smoothed; clean dicky, if there wasn't a shirt in the drawer; and all things in keeping to look very genteel. I always told one story of the way I was followed home by the lapdogs; for, as mother said, "repeating the same lie wasn't telling a fresh un, and couldn't be booked as such," and, therefore, in a religious point of view, I stuck to the same crammer, which was this: "Mother had sent me home — just about where the animal was missed — with some linen, and had given me a penny for the errand. Taking a fancy to a savoury meat-pie, I laid out the money in the purchase of it, and supposed the morsel that tempted me had sharpened the dog's taste for meat-pies, as, do what I would, nothing would drive him from my heels, and home with me he was determined

to go. However," I used to say, "he was very happy with me, and shared my meals with brotherly love and affection." In nine cases out of ten, this innocent tale acted remarkably well; and not only did I hook the reward for mother, but something to boot for myself, being generally dismissed with a shilling or sixpence, and a caution "not to spend it all at once."

Things had gone on very prosperous for some years, there being no bad debts or drawback in the trade, except a little hush-money to a wide-awake Charley now and then; and I looked upon grabbing lapdogs as one of the best ready-money businesses going.

One morning, however, mother woke with a shortness in her wind, and a sort of wheezing in her throat, and says she, "Jim, I'm cats-meat, you may depend on't."

"You're a-joking, mother," replied I.

"Hope I am," said she; "but I feel uncommon like it, I assure ye. Blessed if I

don't begin to think we had better turned the mangle than prigged lapdogs."

"Don't get parson-struck," rejoined I. "Let me go for a doctor; he'll soon set all right again."

"Do, my dear boy," returned she. "A little mercury or laudanum, or some such simple, might give me relief, and it's our bounden duty to have a good kick before we go."

In double quick time I went for the nearest apothecary, who soon returned home with me; and, after examining mother, he stuck his fleam into one of her arms, and took about half a pail of blood from her.

"There," said he, "ma'am, you're sound again as an acorn. Take more exercise and less nourishment, and you'll live in spite of your enemies."

The doctor was a thin, tall, pale-faced young man, dressed all in black, and looked at first a very steady-going coach. But I couldn't help thinking there was a twinkle in his small,

grey eyes, which spoke of the devil more than of the gospel. His mouth, too, was pursed up as if there was some fun in him, and there was a kind of loose, careless way with him which told that, although he might see a good many down-in-the-mouth affairs, his heart wasn't a bit the heavier for them.

I can't tell how he managed it ; but, before he left mother, he wormed out all about the lapdogs. On account of the old woman's weakness, I suppose, she let the cat out of the bag bit by bit, word by word, until he knew that the yeller mangle, painted on the red board swinging on the outside of the door, was as much of a blind as I did.

"I've heard of the business before," said he, "but never had a patient in the line until now. It's more profitable than mangling, I suppose?"

"A great deal, sir," replied mother, faintly, "and the returns is quicker. Little Jim and I," continued she, "might turn our arms off at

the mangle, and starve at the work : whereas, the lapdog line is but bare amusement."

"But have you never been found out?" inquired the doctor.

"Never," replied mother, "and never shall," said she, confidently.

"That's the opinion of most people who happen to be successful in breaking the laws," observed the doctor. "But they generally get caught at last."

"Ah, sir!" returned mother, "that's because they get bumptious on their luck. If folks would be as careful after success as they are afore it, there wouldn't be nearly so many slips of mishap. Stick to the corners, I say, sir—stick to the corners."

"Good advice on a bad subject," rejoined the doctor. "However, the secret of your trade with me is inviolable," continued he. "Keep your feet warm, your head cool, and your mind towards God."

In a very few days mother was herself

again, and recommenced business as fresh as ever. From some cause, however, which she didn't think worth while to explain, I was never again sent home with the pickings up and gatherings.

"Jim," said she, on the very day that she quitted her bed for good, "I've made up my mind to send you to school to learn your book, and become a wiser man than your mother. For the future, I shan't employ you in the trade in any way whatever, but desire that you'll copy a good many folks you may see at every crossing — forget the ways by which you riz. It's a mother's advice, Jim, and one that's seen many a rough and tumble in her life, I can assure ye. You may read, when you can," continued she, "in some silly books, that we should never forget the ladder by which you climb. Jim, the sooner we do it the better, more especially if it isn't a sound one. For when the remembrance of a thing can't benefit ye, the sooner it's forgotten the

better. That's my opinion, and it's one made from solid stuff—experience, Jim."

Soon after this I went to school ; and, although a little late in the day for a beginner, I proved myself a downy scholar, for in less than a year I could read out of hand, missing a hardish word here and there, and could write my own name in large text. Wasn't mother proud of this, sure-ly !

"My dear boy," said she, "you can now do what many people can't do or won't — write your name so as it can be made out without puzzling one's brain, whether it's James Toddy or William Snuds ; and I now think we must decide upon what calling you're to take up ; for too much learning is like a large dinner for a little stomach — it can't be digested with comfort."

"I've had quite enough to suit my palate," replied I. "And as to the calling, I've made a choice for myself."

"And what is it, Jim?" asked mother.

"You've seen those little funny-looking lads," returned I, "with gaiters, knees, short jackets, some scarlet, some blue, with red collars, round hats trimmed with gold lace, and stout thick whips in their hands, riding small ugly horses, so much alike that you'd think it was the same knacker continually on the go, and rattling over the stones as if he couldn't fall down if he tried."

"Certainly I have," rejoined mother; "post-office letter-carriers, you mean," continued she.

"Professionally called toddlers," added I. "Well, that's what I wish to be."

"What an ambitious boy!" exclaimed the old woman, proud as a peacock with a new-fledged tail. "But that's a government appointment, Jim."

"I know it," replied I. "But a pal of mine, who is a toddler, says, from my size and weight, I should be sure to get one if I asked for it. For the weight, by act of parliament,

must be under seven stone, and it's very difficult to keep a growing lad under that long. So you see the vacancies are numerous."

"That's true enough, no doubt," said mother. "But how can you ride when you've never tried?"

"How can a chap swim that's never gone in the water?" returned I.

"Not at all, in course," replied she.

"But that's no reason he should never begin," rejoined I. "We must all have our first trial."

"Don't talk of trials," said the old lady, with a bit of a shake through her system. "I can't abide the word trial," continued she, "it sounds so sessions and Baileyfied."

Directly after this, I took myself to the yard where the toddlers' horses were kept, and making friends with the lads, rode their nags to and from the stable, and after a couple of months' practice, became as good a jockey as any of 'em. I then applied to the

superintendent of the boys, who was an overgrown toddler, for the vacant situation to Hounslow, and without much trouble hooked it. Lor ! how stiff mother was when I told her I was going to mount one of his majesty's stud the next day ! The starch of pride seemed to crisp her very cap-ribands. She looked at me with glory not to be described.

"I believe my ears," said she, "and yet disbelieve 'em at the same time. Jim, *my* boy Jim, holding a real government appointment ! it's a blessed dream, I fear."

"A wide awake un, you may rely on it, mother," replied I. "And if you want a plain matter of fact to back my words, here's *my breeches*," continued I, shewing her a pair bought second-hand to commence with.

These breeches quite overcome the old lady. She looked at 'em with feminine tenderness, as women do when they're a-brewing of brine, and after a gulp or two she snatched 'em from my hands, and moistened 'em with her tears, saying :

“ Jim, I never had thought a pair of old corduroy shorts could have so moved me. Blessed if I ain’t a weak woman, ater all !”

She might be, gents ; I didn’t contradict her ; but if ever a female looked more solid of bone and flesh than another, it was Mrs. Toddy at that moment.

CHAPTER XVI.

TODDY'S TALE CONTINUED.

My situation fitted me well. I raced with my pals as far as we went together, and with every butcher-boy along the road. To keep time was the order, no matter how; and so long as we did this there was no fault found with the condition of the nags.

A few months flew by pleasantly enough, and I was quite the pride of the alley, whipped and spurred as I always was; when my master, the superintendent of toddlers, looked at me one morning as if he was taking a reg'lar survey from toe to top, and then back again from top to toe.

"Jim Toddy," said he, "you're getting over-weight, and no mistake. You'd better take time by the nose, and see about a fresh place."

"I don't think I am, sir," replied I, "but if I should be on the increase, I'll take to the reducing system."

"That may act for a little while," returned he. "It can't answer long though. So follow my advice, and look about for a new berth."

Knowing that he was an old hand, I thought it better to throw one eye to windward, and look out for another occupation in the same line; for I became uncommon fond of riding, and determined never to pad it for my living, if possible to prevent it.

Most toddlers, if they don't run up too tall, become postboys; and as I thickened instead of springing up weedy, I made up my mind to get to a good posting-house, if so be I could make sufficient interest to get to one.

Luckily for me, on the very day I got notice to quit, I heard of a likely nibble at old Bob Newman's, the celebrated post-master, and out of a mob of candidates got the berth.

I now picked up money like a hen swallowing peas, quick and easy, and as I couldn't live any longer in the east, mother moved along with me to a little house in Windmill Street, Haymarket; but with the agreement that she was to give over priggish lapdogs, and live on my earnings.

"I've no objection, Jim," said she, "to retire from business; most folks hasn't. But I won't promise not to bag one now and then by way of amusement."

It was in the month of February, and about four months after I'd got my situation, that the old woman and me were sitting over our supper, and having what I call some real comfort and enjoyment. There was a small cozy round table scorching its legs before a real vicious-looking fire,—it was so fierce and

bright. I was sitting on one side, and mother on the other, while a large hot bullock's heart and a dish of baked taters smoked so between us, that we both looked in a regular fog. A quart pot of foaming porter stood at my elbow, and another at the old woman's, to save the trouble of passing the malt, and a black bottle which seemed full of water, but whose contents tasted more like gin, was very handy close by. There was a loaf of new bread, a lump of fresh butter, and half a pound of real double Gloucester, which for two people might be considered a very decent allowance.

"Talk about this being a miserable world!" said mother, looking slowly round the room, and holding a prepared morsel on her fork to cool in the puffing she gave it; "I should like to know what folks expect in the other. Blessed," continued she, lowering her voice to a whisper, "if I don't think some of 'em will be mistaken, Jim!"

"Serve 'em right if they are," replied I, taking a pull at the pot.

"To be sure it will," rejoined she, "for I'm certain a good six-fifths of persons' miseries are hatched under their own feathers. That's my religion, Jim."

"And a true one, too, mother," added I. "Instead of shaking their heads, moaning, and grunting about sorrows past, present, and to come, if they would just face 'em with a good *ha! ha!* and feel 'wot's the odds a hundred years hence!' more than half would be scared away in the distance, like so many crows at the smell of gunpowder, and the remainder might come and be damn'd."

"Even here, in this cozy crib of a room," returned mother, again looking all round the walls, upon which the rays of the fierce little fire glowed again, making an old favourite blackbird, hung in a wicker cage by the window, wink and blink in the cheerful warmth—"even in this cozy room," repeated she,

“some folks couldn’t be satisfied ; no, not if they were invited to eat and drink at our expense.”

At this moment there was a gentle tap at the street-door.

“Who can that be, I wonder?” said I.

“Perhaps you’re wanted for an extra turn,” replied mother.

“No,” added I, going to answer the summons, “that’s impossible, I know. There was six before me, without an order on the books.”

Upon opening the door, I was somewhat surprised to see the doctor I went for when mother was ill. And although a little more than two years had passed since I saw him, there was no alteration in his traps, form, or figure.

“How do you do, young Toddy?” said he. “You’ve grown a fine lad. How’s your mother?”

“She’ll answer for herself, sir, if you’ll walk in,” replied I.

"Alive and well then, eh?" rejoined he.
"Appetite good?"

"Quite hearty," replied mother, making her appearance, and bolting the best part of a kidney potater as big as your fist. "Quite hearty, sir, I thank ye."

"It gives me pleasure to hear it, Mrs. Toddy," returned the doctor. "Having a small favour to ask of you, ma'am, perhaps you'll forgive my trespassing on your attention for a few minutes."

"With all the pleasure in life," said mother. "Pray take a chair," continued she, putting one next to her own, "and if you can manage to pick a bit with us, sir, we shall feel proud."

The doctor, however, excused himself from grubbing, and after a little clearing of his throat with a few scrapes and coughs, and kicking the heels of his boots together, he said :—

"May I ask, without the least intentional

rudeness, whether you are still following the lapdog business?"

"As a *business*," replied mother, "I've retired from it. Although once in a way I pick up a straggler, more for pastime than profit."

"Ah!" added the doctor. "Then you have no objection to earn an honest penny as in the days of old?"

"None in the least," said mother. "It's more Jim's than mine. Indeed, since I've been living in these parts, among the nobs," continued she, "I could have nicked a fortune if I'd had my own way."

"Well, well! perchance it's for the best you should abstain from picking and —" he would have added, "stealing;" the word nearly dropped from his lips; but he corrected himself ere it fell, and then with a smile added, "however, without uselessly occupying your time further, I'll to the purpose of my visit."

“Do, sir,” said I, “and we’re much honoured by your having one.”

The doctor bowed, and proceeded.

“In order that you may not misconstrue or misunderstand the object I’m about to carry out,” said he, “I will first explain my motive, and then we shall clear away the smoke before we come to the fire.”

“A very good plan, sir,” observed I.

“Not far from your late residence,” continued the doctor, “is, as perhaps you know, a place called Spital Square. It’s an old, dull, gloomy-looking place, remarkable only for the twists and turns which lead to and from it, and the number of posts standing in a row, for no earthly purpose save the making of every corpulent person go between them sideways. As very often, however, the most lovely flowers are found in the dreariest spots, so in this uncongenial locality dwells the most beautiful and charming of woman-kind. To say that I admire her,” exclaimed

the doctor, clasping his hands and looking at the ceiling, "would poorly express what I feel, when drinking in the delicious nectar of her charms from all visible points at which I can by a stretch of ingenuity get a glimpse at them. From a top attic opposite, which I've rented for the last six weeks for the express purpose, I've peered, peeped, and watched like an amorous grimalkin at an area gate. I have tracked her footsteps with the pertinacity of her shadow, whenever an opportunity presented itself, and flitted in her presence at all times and seasons. As for looks and signs, there's not an indicative one in the eyes, nor a comprehensible move on the fingers that I've not resorted to; but, alas! all to no purpose. For, although I feel assured that I'm not a subject of indifference to her, still the unintermitting watchfulness of her respectable parents totally precludes the desirable attainment of my strenuous endeavours."

“And pray, sir,” said mother, “may I be so bold to ask what you *do* want?”

“That which her boot-black has, ma’am, and I have not,” replied the doctor—“an introduction; the mere simple form of an introduction,” continued he.

“But if you want to know the young woman,” returned I, “why not tell her so at once, whether her respectable parents watch or not?”

“That may sound very well in theory,” rejoined he; “but these tender affairs are not to be taken by storm. The attempt would blow into imperceptible atoms the nucleus of hope, and leave not a shattered remnant remaining. No, no, no,” said the doctor, “I’ve a better plan than that, and to carry it into effect I require your assistance, Mrs. Toddy.”

“One good turn deserves another, all the world over,” replied mother. “Anything I can do, sir, say the word, and it shall be done.”

“Apt and ready as I hoped to find ye,” added he; “and now to the very head and front of this most important affair. The charmer of my soul and idol of my heart is the only progeny—”

“What’s that?” interrupted the old woman.

“The offspring,” replied the doctor.

“Ah! the kids, you mean,” exclaimed mother.

“In more familiar language, the kids,” returned he. “I was about explaining that the lady was the only kid of the parental stock—a very amiable couple, whose chief merits are comprised in a heavy banker’s account, and a large stock of silks in a neighbouring warehouse, which share in equal proportions their joint affections with a little disagreeable, pert, fat, pug-dog. Never, perhaps, was an animal so conscious as this of the elevated position he holds in the regards of the wealthy couple. His tail twists with egotistical con-

ceit, and he seems to disdain the approach of a brother cur that chance may direct 'between the wind and his nobility.' At all times of the day he is strutting and dodging at the heels of the old mamma ; and as she, for the most part, is continually in close attendance upon her daughter—the fairest of women in the primitive state of girlhood—both form a guard of prevention against any assault upon her heart, and keep her in close custody. Now, after mature cogitation," continued the doctor, "I have resolved to turn this pug-dog, who several times I've heard called Buzz, to my advantage. My dear Mrs. Toddy, you shall exercise your organ of acquisitiveness, by prigging Buzz, and I'll restore him to his afflicted proprietors. By this innocent and innoxious proceeding I shall not only obtain a footing within the portal, but be received with the warmest demonstrations of gratitude. Success sits at my helm, and points my prow ! The sunshine of Love tips

the perspective with the pinion of Hope ! Buzz, upon thy abstraction rests my earthly bliss ! Mrs. Toddy, to be, or not to be, depends on your prudent capacity and nimble digits !”

“ I’ll try my best, you may depend on’t, sir,” said mother. “ But if the animal is always watched, I may have some trouble in grabbing him.”

“ From close observation,” returned the doctor, “ I’ve learned every peculiarity pertaining to Buzz’s temperament. Of an evening, just before dusk, it is his custom to take a whiff of fresh air as far as a neighbouring lamp-post, when, after examining it very minutely, as if questioning the quality of the metal, he retraces his steps to his own door, and upon receiving sufficient persuasion to re-enter the house by the servant in attendance, he condescends to do so. This will be the happy moment for—”

“Is the post sitiuated at a corner?” interrupted mother.

“It is, Mrs. Toddy,” replied the doctor.

“Then Buzz is mine the first go,” rejoined she.

CHAPTER XVII.

TODDY'S TALE CONTINUED.

The evening was just as if it had been picked for the purpose by the clerk of the weather, when mother started on the business of prigging Buzz. There was a blue thinnish mist which made everything appear as if you were looking through doubled muslin, and a cold breeze so nipped the people's noses that all hung their heads as they hurried along, without noticing anybody or anything that they passed or passed them; so that there wasn't a chance of the old woman being observed, as she took her stand near the corner where the pug-dog was expected.

With his head craning out of the garret-window, the doctor stood watching with a heart bumping against his ribs, as though it would fracture 'em, for the coming off of the event, and he stretched his eyes, and drew his breath shortly, whenever a door was heard to open, thinking, every time he was disappointed, that no man was so ill-used before by deceiving sounds. At length, however, a lock was turned back with a strong spring, which he had listened to so many times, that it was impossible to be mistaken in its well-known click. The door slowly opened upon its hinges, and out waddled the long-looked-for and anxiously-expected Buzz.

Slowly he came forth, sniffing the cold air, and sneezing angrily because it hadn't been warmed on purpose for him. Giving a look of inquiry up the Square, and a side glimpse down, he was apparently satisfied of the state of public affairs, and betook himself in the direction of the much-frequented lamp-post.

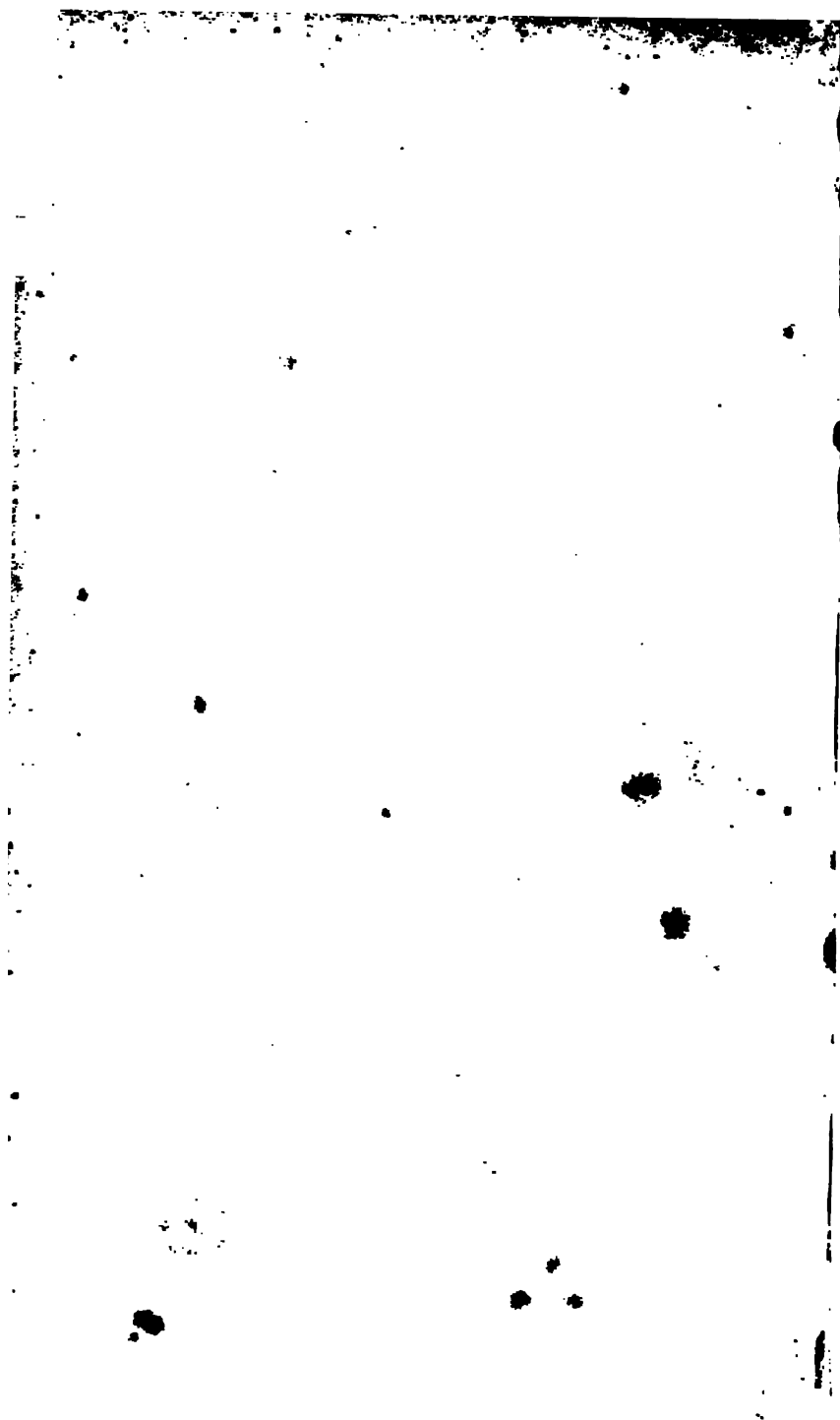
Many an unfortunate dog has been in the like predicament. Danger was at hand, but he was as innocent of its whereabouts as the moon which refused to shine above him. A cat screamed. It sounded like, "Buzz, beware!" but he heeded not the caution. On he trotted. Again the ill-omened screech rung in the air, loading it with its hideous howl. Still Buzz, unwarned, approached the spot, and as he was making the usual inspection of the post, and just arrived at the conclusion that it possessed no new features worthy of remark, a stealthy hand neared, like that of a boy's bent to catch a fly sunning itself on a wall, and clutching him securely by the roll of fat encircling his neek, whisked him from the ground, and shoved him without ceremony into a basket.

The doctor watched the movement. With a cheer he rushed down the stairs into the street, and scuttled after mother, who, although so lusty, rolled along at a wonderful pace, like a hogshead of tallow down hill.

Mr. Toddy stealing the Dog



*And catching him securely by the collar of
fat skinning his neck:—*



Wishing to see the old woman's movement on this particular occasion, I had placed myself within range of a view of the proceeding, and, when mother bolted with the prize, I stood still in the same spot, to learn what would follow.

"Buzz, Buzz, Buzz," called a young woman's voice. "Come, pretty Buzz."

"Ah!" said I to myself, "Buzz is some distance from this neighbourhood by now."

"Pray, my lad," said the young woman, looking all round, and turning about like a kitten after her tail, "have you seen a little dog near here?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied I, for I thought it best to put her out of her misery at once, "I saw one taken up a few moments ago by a woman, and shoved into a basket."

"Angels of heaven!" exclaimed she, clasping her hands and looking as if she had just heard of the warrant for her sudden execution without the benefit of clergy—"Angels of

heaven ! it can't be so. Missis ! master ! Buzz ! when ? where ? how ? Tell me, young man, as you hope for mercy !”

I was puzzled to know exactly what was the question she required an answer to ; but, supposing it was the particulars of the dog's capture, I replied that “ I happened to see a fattish woman lift a little pug from the ground and put him into her basket, and, supposing the animal belonged to her, I took no further notice of the proceeding.”

“ Then I'm a ruined woman !” rejoined she, deliberately. “ I'm ruined to all intents and purposes !” and, turning from me, she rushed into the house, screaming—

“ Oh, missis, we've lost our Buzz ! He's kidnapped, grabbed, bagged, and mizzled !”

In less than half a minute an old lady came scrambling to the door, followed by a young and pretty one—all curls, youth, and beauty—and after them a gentleman and the young woman. The whole party was distracted,

and, as for the most part follows in such cases, each abused the other as the cause of the loss.

“How could you be so culpably negligent?” asked the old lady, reproaching the servant.

“The fault is more yours, my dear,” replied the husband, as snappishly as a dog in a fit, when they’re pumping him half-dead. “I told ye never to let him go out of your sight.”

“Why it was you, pa,” rejoined the daughter, “who rang the bell for Mary to take him out this evening.”

“I will not be contradicted, Miss,” returned the father, who, like most parents when they’ve got the worst of an argument with their children, shut his daughter’s lips and imposed his authoritative silence. “I will *not* be contradicted,” repeated he.

“What steps shall we take to recover our sweet Buzz?” inquired the lady, sobbing and crying.

“God only knows!” ejaculated her husband. “But I suppose,” continued he, bitterly, “that I shall be obliged to offer a handsome reward.”

Without waiting to hear any more of their plans for getting back Buzz, I hastened homewards, and found, upon my arrival, mother and the doctor cozily sitting before the fire, with the pug-dog stretched on the rug between them, as comfortable as possible under existing circumstances. We were all in high spirits at the success of the undertaking; and the doctor, in consequence, stood a first-rate treat. I told them of all that had passed after their bolting, and advised him to keep Buzz for a few days, in order to work the old folks into a frenzy.

“That I will,” replied he. “And remember, Mrs. Toddy, whatever reward may be offered,” continued he, “I shall consider myself your debtor in double the amount.”

“You’re a liberal gentleman,” replied mo-

ther, "and deserves luck in all your affairs. But I will only agree to take the money in the event of your winning the young lady."

In every paper, the next day, and upon almost every hording and wall where bills might be stuck, there was a description of Buzz, and a reward of five pounds offered for his recovery. Days passed by, and no tidings could be obtained by the mourning family concerning their lost favourite. At length, when all were wound up to a very fine pitch, the doctor went forward to relieve their care and anxiety. Never, perhaps, was a man so favourably received when the cause of his visit was made known; and, after playing his cards with the skill of an experienced hand, he completely took the place of Buzz in the affections of the family, and, within six months of the day mother prigged Buzz, the daughter became the doctor's willing bride.

Thus, gents, ended the last bagging of a

lapdog by my respected mother, the late Mrs. Toddy. For (continued the ex-postboy) she is now what she once expected before the time—catsmeat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OTTER HUNT.

“Originality is certainly a rare feature now-a-days,” observed Mr. Wirkem, upon Toddy concluding his tale; “but few men or things are to be seen or heard of,” continued he, “that haven’t been published in all sorts of ways, and all sorts of things relating to them. However, the lapdog line is quite a novelty, at least to me; and I beg to say, Mr. Toddy, its charm hasn’t been like throwing pearl to swine. It was quite a relish, sir; an anchovy to a glass of good liquor.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” replied the ex-post-

boy. "As a first venture I felt a little queer at the start. Howsomever, there's nothing like a flush at a hill. Give 'em the gaffs and flax, and up ye go like beans!"

"To be sure you do," returned the President. "To be sure you do," repeated he. "And that should be the sentiment of all folks at the bottom of the hill of life. Give 'em the gaffs and flax, and up ye go like beans!"

The old coachman's repetition of Toddy's axiom drew forth a loud expression of mirth from the assembly.

"Come, Dick," said the Vice-president, checking his laugh, "give us an excuse for a glass."

"With all my heart," replied Mr. Wirkem. "The very shadow of one will do for this company, I know."

"He knows his mates well, seeminly," rejoined Bill Johnson.

"As well as if each of your hearts throbbed

in my own buzzum," returned the President. "That is to say," continued he, "where the bottle is concerned."

"There's no hypocrisy in that, Dick," observed Tom Short. "No, no, no. Truth, genuine truth, swims in every drop of good liquor, no matter the kind. Lor," continued he, raising his glass from the table, and peeping through the beads which floated on the surface, "how I love good mixed grog!"

"If we're to be judged by the truth we utter in this world," replied the President, "and that's the greatest tantariddle you ever gave tongue to, you'll become, Tom, one of the leading angels in heaven, as sure as my name's Dick Wirkem."

"Ha, ha! I *should* like to see him there," returned Toddy. "But I'll be d—d if I'll believe it, until I *do* see it!"

"Be easy," said John Hogg, correcting his friend; "we never swears in this society. If you think the gentleman's going to hell, can't you say so mildly?"

"Oh! to be sure I can," replied Toddy, tartly—"to be sure I can, as mild as a dumb infant."

"Now, my boys," said the President, "are ye filled with bumpers full and fair?"

"All, Dick, all," replied Bill Johnson.

"Then here's to our noble selves. May the joys of our Free-an-Easy be felt from the queen to the peasant; sociality, hospitality, and friendship."

Echo caught the cheer which rang from every tongue when the sentiment was pledged, making the jovial sounds rattle through crazy panels and time-worn chinks, until the regions far and near shook with merriment. Hearts were light, eyes were bright, and each face revealed the sunshine glowing in every breast.

"'Tis glorious!" shouted the old coachman, chinking his empty glass upon the table, in order to increase the din. "'Tis glorious to be with such a team of trumps! I wish we could sit together thus for ever."

"If we could, sir," observed Melancholy Joey, who bore an appearance of unusual pleasantry—it even amounted to an expression of comfort—"if we could, sir," repeated he, "what a-bustin up there would be in the darky trade!"

"How so?" inquired Mr. Wirkem.

"I mean if all folks could enjoy themselves as we do," replied Mr. Wyper. "Nothing keeps people alive so long as larfin, sir. I've heard my old master say, he should like a hact of parliament to shut up larfin for a year. He wouldn't ask for a greater blessing."

"I'm glad he hasn't his wish," added the President, "for, if it was a penal statute, we should suffer wofully."

"I say, you'd better be makin up your mind as to your call," observed one-eyed Jack to his friend. "You'll be tapped in a hurry, remember," continued he.

"I'm all right," replied the egotistical Toddy. "If I'm not all right, I *should* like to know who is?"

"As that's the case," rejoined the President, overhearing the observation, "make the choice at once. Time flies fast; but we've just got room for a moderate winded one."

"Then here's for a random shot," returned Toddy. "I'll slip the bit in your mouth, sir," said he, pointing with the end of his pipe to Jacob Plywel.

"As nice a bird as any in the covey," remarked John Hogg.

"Thank ye, John, for the cheer," replied Jacob. "But really I'm at fault now."

"Tush, man, tush," added Mr. Wirkem. "A good hound never remains there long. Hit it off, hit it off," continued he.

"Well, then! here goes for a drag I once had for an otter," said Jacob. "As you know," continued he, addressing Mr. Wirkem, "I was a sporting blade when the bean was full in my tooth."

The President nodded, and replied, "You just were, Jacob. From pitch and toss to a bull-bait."

"Nothing came amiss."

"Many a miss did come, though," interrupted Mr. Wirkem, with an inward cachinnatory explosion. "Many a one, I know, continued he. "There was Mary ——"

"Oh, Dick!" exclaimed Jacob. "A secret with you goes up turnip, and comes down squash."

"Never mind, my lad," returned the old coachman. "Go on with your otter drag."

"It's scarcely worth your hearing," said Jacob. "But perchance a description of the fun, as it really took place, may amuse ye. The incidents I'm about relating happened just before I became a dragsman, some fifteen years ago, and was one of my many frolics by flood and field."

"Silence, silence," said the President, as a clink of one-eyed Jack's pail was heard upon the boards. "Silence for Mr. Plywel," who then began.

I can imagine the smile of the sportsman,

who has enjoyed this almost obsolete chase in all its former nice observances, when I announce that, early in the morning, when the mist still hung in heavy folds upon flood and field, I commenced a reconnoitre with an old favourite pointer-bitch. We were alone, as we had often been before, brushing away the dewdrops with the break-of-day ramble, and endeavouring to be mutually agreeable and confidential. The sagacity of this animal deserves some mention. In the common attributes of a pointer, I never yet saw her superior, and she retrieved her game as well as any dog broken for the express purpose. She would hunt rats, and kill them with the *gout* of a wiry terrier. In covert no spaniel could work better, and, although driving a rabbit or a hare with the relish of a harrier, she fell flat to the earth on the discharge of a gun, and took not the least notice of either one or the other in the open ground, except to point them on their forms.

“Donna,” such being her name, was evidently puzzled at my proceedings, and looked wistfully in my face for an explanation. Neither gun nor rod did I carry, and no instrument of destruction for the winged or finny tribe; for, in my excursions upon the denizens of the stream, she frequently was my companion, and evinced her delight at the landing of a skipping fish, by sticking her tail between her legs, and with a loud bark running round me in rapid circles.

As we continued our stroll, I kept my eyes bent upon the mud on the verge of the Deben, and the patches of flags and rushes which here and there were sprinkled in the bosom of the river. At length I discovered some fresh seals from my ball-footed visiter, stamped upon a narrow bank in the centre of the narrow river, and also that which appeared to me to be a couch among some tall rank grass. Pointing with my finger, Donna leaped upon the mud, and commenced a vigilant inspection

with her refined organ of smell, of the lately visible locality. After a great deal of winding, she looked up in my face with wagging tail, and expressed, as plainly as though words revealed her thoughts, that a first impression of the business we were upon had been effected. Instead of keeping close to me, she now galloped up and down the banks, and tried every nook and corner.

As I was examining a suspicious-looking place under the creeper of a decapitated pollard, on the opposite side of the river, I heard a sudden splash, and, turning quickly to the sound, saw my companion lashing the water into a white foam, and turning the stream into whirlpools with her sudden and violent movements. With bent neck and watchful eye she twisted round and round, and the appearance of a large water-rat within a few feet of her jaws revealed the cause of the premature clouding of the stream.

Forgetting for a moment the more lofty

object of pursuit I had in the perspective, the cheer to "Hold him, Donna!" irresistibly escaped my lips, and with much interest I watched her laudable exertions to fulfil the mandate. Away the two paddled down the rapid current—the one for pleasure, the other for sweet life, precious even to a water-rat; and, when a few bold strokes brought the dog within a dangerous proximity to the whiskered thief, down he went like a solid flint, with the laughter of success inflating the air-bubbles dancing in derision on the surface.

"Let those laugh who win" is a fine old proverb, and, notwithstanding the temporary escapes from Donna's willing jaws, I felt the rat's chance was, like a suitor's in chancery, certain destruction in the long swim. A large bed of rushes, not many yards off, appeared to be a spot which the pursued had every inclination to gain. He was within half a dozen feet of the desired haven, when his enemy, perhaps seeing an advantage would

be lost, made a dash at him. Harlequin-like, he popped beneath the sedges, and, as the dog buried herself among them, out came a moorhen, on the wings of fear, and, with distended legs, flapped from the scene of tugging war.

In a short time the rat was visible once more to his unrelenting enemy, and to make him her prize appeared to be the object of her enthusiastic desire. On they went, and the splash and froth of the water told how ardent were the struggles. A few good long strokes brought Donna within snapping distance, and her mouth seemed to be partly opened for the desired operation, when again the rascal dipped and escaped the jaws of death. Round the dog cast a wide circle, and, as the rat's head emerged from the depths below to refresh his lungs, Donna threw herself with a sudden plunge towards him, and flung him like a shuttlecock in the air, with scarcely sufficient time to feel a pang of parting from this sublu-

nary world. "Dead, Donna, dead!" cried I, as she continued to mangle the body of the inanimate victim, and, throwing him upon the green sward, with an unequivocal expression of gratified ambition, she shook the drops from her saturated skin, and barked loudly, as if in egotistical praise of her own prowess.

When we had recovered our wonted composure from the attendant excitement of the watery fray, ideas of the first cause of our early excursion began to again occupy the seat from which they sprung. Three remaining parts of a spotted trout, eaten to the vents, and still fresh as the dewdrops glistening upon the scales, confirmed the supposition of the close neighbourhood of an otter. Now the seals were as plentiful as daisies in a meadow, with a May sun warming the expanding leaves, and Donna's exertions became doubled to discover the retreat of the forager. For some distance I tracked the otter in the mud, and opposite to the roots of an old tree,

which had been blown across the river by some wild gust of the wintry wind, I lost all trace of him. Along the bank my favourite went, and, turning suddenly round as she passed the fallen tree, every hackle rose upon her back, and, winding high in the air, she would have dashed into the stream, had I not caught her by the collar, and checked her in the spring. "Softly, softly!" said I; "you've *found him*, my lass; but we must have some assistance to kill him." And thus with an old pointer did I discover the holt that held an otter.

I had collected a team of the best dogs that could be drafted in the vicinity, some three days previous to the attempt being made; and, although each was any thing but a cur, I think few men have unkennelled such a tag-rag and bobtail crew, to hunt even rats in a barn, as I had to open a cheer to in my otter drag. A couple and a half of my *hounds* consisted of three white Scotch terriers, ready

to have "a go" at a mouse or a rhinoceros ; one was a shepherd's dog, as the shoemaker of the village ventured to swear, but whose appearance, to me, looked unpleasantly like a poaching lurcher with cropped ears and tail ; and a fourth was a brindled bull-dog, with one of the thickest heads and thinnest tails I have yet seen in any of those illustrations of our national character. Two black and white mongrels, having the mingled blood of a hound, poodle, and pug-dog, and an old dark-brown curly-coated water-spaniel, with the pointer, completed my heterogeneous pack. So afraid was I of an immediate desertion of my forces, that I had each member coupled and led to the seat of action, confiding in the heat of warfare for more glorious proceedings. Upwards of thirty stout bumpkins, armed with heavy cudgels, and a few of my friends, accompanied me, after lining the inward man with consoling solids and fluids ; and not a little surprise was occasioned by my declaring

to them that within fifteen minutes I would find an otter.

Upon arriving at the spot where Donna gave such decided indications of his whereabouts, I placed a select few of my companions in advanced positions, as trusty sentinels, ordered the majority in the rear to keep well back, and to maintain silence, and directed the old pointer to try once more the likely holt. Again she winded high in the air, dashed through the sedges into the river, and, driving her head into the holt, commenced tearing away at it with her fore-feet, as if she had been well practised in the mysteries of sapping and mining.

“Now for the spade and pick-axe,” said I; when two of my eager votaries, well skilled in the use of such weapons, commenced an attack, that promised in a very limited space to lay bare the inward recesses of the rooty home. “Be quiet, keep your mouths shut, and your eyes open,” continued I, “and we shall get

some sport in a crack." Globes of perspiration began to trickle from the brows and cheeks of the diggers, the dogs were squatting on their haunches, watching with pricked ears the progress of the work, and at every click the axe now made the excitement of all seemed to rise one degree,—when I heard the sudden exclamation from a boy standing a few yards from me, of "Crikey, what a rat!" Casting my eyes towards him, I saw, or thought I saw, an otter down. Before I could be quite assured of the correctness of my vision, one of the terriers called Tartar made a spring like an antelope into the river, and likewise almost carried the man who was holding him into it. "Slip the dogs," hallooed I, as I now saw the otter show himself about forty yards up the river, having broke from some secret channel, and with a "Loo, have at him!" the whole swept up the bank, and followed me headlong into the water.

Never shall I forget the scene that now en-

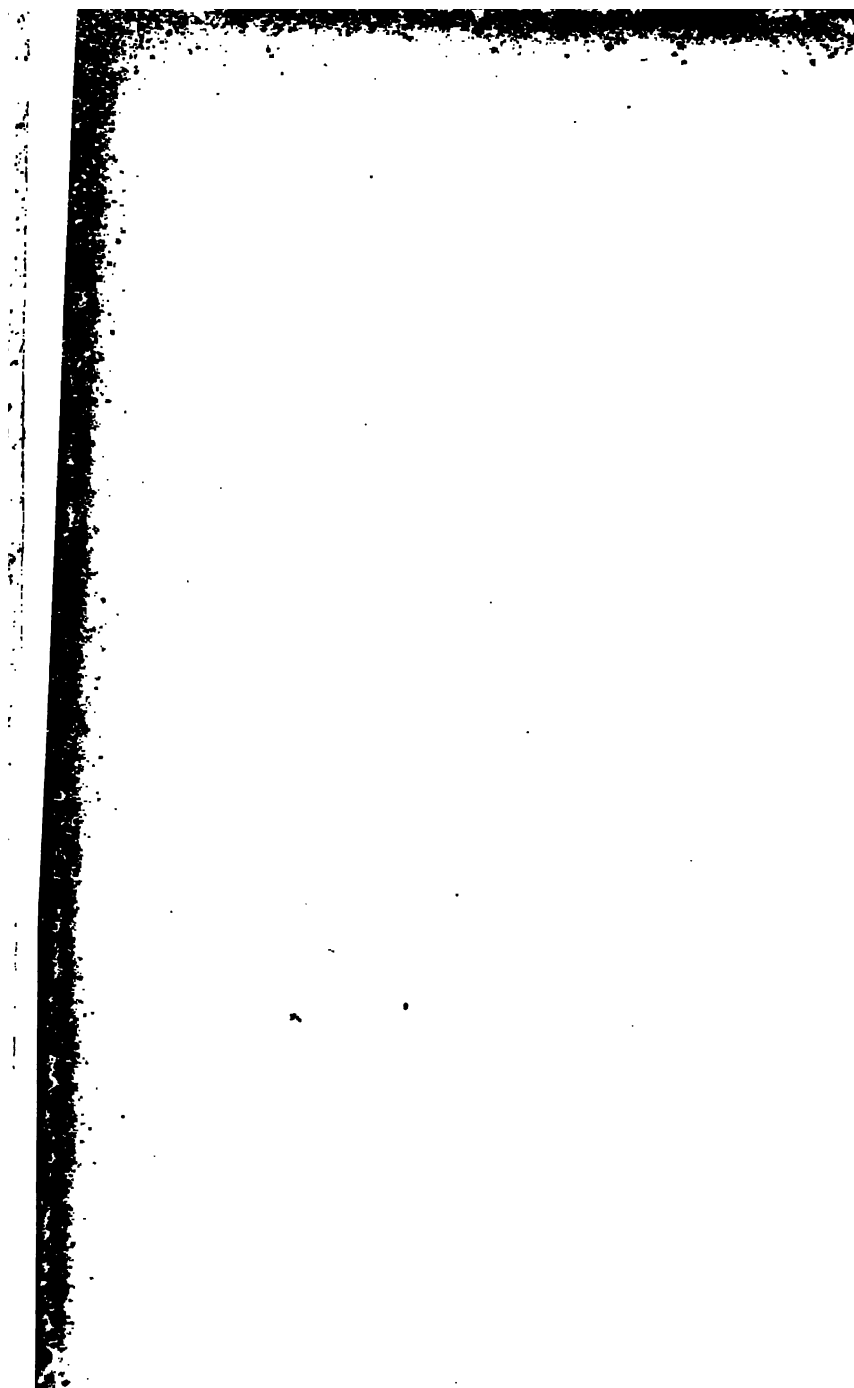
sued. In every direction men and boys leaped into the river, yelling like a parcel of Indian savages, and lost to all kind of control. Some found themselves in dangerous depths, and were shrieking for assistance, while others roared with laughter at seeing them so capitally ducked. Above, below, around, was nothing but boisterous fun, and the essence of confusion.

Losing sight of the otter for a longer period than pleased me, I left the stream, and, running up the side of the river, I saw the "varmint" streaking along an artificial bank on the extreme verge of the water, and some distance from us. With a cheer I got the dogs with me, and going it at my best pace—which I am proud to say is any thing but slow—I put them in view of the enemy, and in a few seconds they forced him to try again the depths where the green rush springs. There were now so many short bends in the river, that, although the otter might rise within a

The Otter Hunt.



As he again reappeared, the terrier caught him by the extreme rear.



few feet of the dogs, they could not be aware of his peeping, unless well directed. I, therefore, threw some of my forces forward, others in the rear, and remained with the pack myself, giving strict injunctions for a loud halloo when the otter was viewed. These commands, however, were needless, as, whenever an eye fell upon the object of the watery chase, strong lungs proclaimed the event, and well-strung sinews were exerted to render no second sight necessary.

As we were watching for a re-appearance after a long dive, and the dogs were swimming here and there with yapping tongues, the otter rose on a shallow ford, and, although I could have had a fair chance for aiming a successful blow at him, I held back, and out he broke from the water, and rattled away over a wide pasture in noble style. Some distance was gained before the dogs could scramble up the banks; but, when the lurcher had effected an exit, it soon began to visibly

decrease. Far ahead of the others, he led the run, while, in accordance with their uneven and respective capacities for speed, the remainder followed in the most approved disorder. We made the best of our time after the pack; and as we scampered away, the wet flew from us like mops between the active palms of Betty-maids on Saturday mornings.

With the exception of the brindled bull and one of the nondescripts, not a dog was in sight after the fence at the end of the meadow had been charged; but, after hopping over two extensive fallows, with bellows to mend at every stride, and getting through a low grass field, which was in close affinity to a bog, I discovered the whole of the dogs "brought-to" at a gateway. Surmising the cause long before my arrival, I prepared my knife, and looked for a long pricking bramble. Seeing one suitable for my purpose, I hastily severed it from the hedge, and hastened towards the checked group.

One terrier had taken up his position at the end of the hollowed trunk of a tree forming a drain under the gateway ; while another wiry-faced fellow had rammed his head and neck and a third of his body into the opposite terminus. Drawing the dogs away, I inserted my bramble, and felt the otter about the centre of the drain ; but, notwithstanding some vigorous stirring up, and keeping all my companions a respectful distance from the starting-post, no hint “ to go ” would be taken by the sneak.

However, there are a great many more ways and means of ejecting a tenant than by pitching him out of the window ; I therefore began to think of applying the milder and generally the more successful means of stratagem, instead of rude force. A farm-house was close by, to which I sent for a bundle of straw and some lucifer-matches, or a tinder-box. The last-mentioned article, with some straw, were quickly brought to me, and, after

putting a large quantity into the drain, I applied a match to the smouldering tinder, and set the fuel in a blaze. In a very short time the retreat became too hot to hold the fugitive, and, enveloped in a dense smoke, he burst from the hollow trunk, and sped away again towards the river at astonishing speed.

In a string, and in about the same order as before, my pack swept after him, and, with shouts that made the welkin ring, my companions followed, with light heels and lighter hearts. I expected the otter would be run into before he could head back to the river ; but by extraordinary exertions he managed to regain the water, and when we arrived on its brink every dog was breasting the stream with redoubled exertions to pull his victim down. But a very short distance from the lurcher's jaws, I saw the otter rise for a moment, and, finding himself so close to danger, down he went like an arrow, with scarcely sufficient time to get one sob of air. Now he

once more broke from the river, and ran along the shore under the steep bank, with the lurcher close to him; but the weight of the dog on the mud told severely against his chance of capture, and, fearing some strong drain might be found not far off, I drew three of the dogs from the water, by having them thrown upon the bank, and, cheering them loudly forward, they got a view of the otter, and, making a dash at him with a reckless jump from above, turned him again into the water.

“There’s a wide, brick drain of a hundred yards long, sir, close by,” said a man, with just sufficient wind left to enable him to make the communication.

“Show me where,” I replied; and off we went at the best pace left in us, to discover the obnoxious spot, leaving the dogs to manage themselves for a few brief moments.

Finding the information to be correct, I doffed my shooting-jacket, and with “a slop”

from my companion's shoulders, we pushed both into the mouth of the drain, and effectually stopped all ingress there. Returning quickly to the seat of action, I frequently saw the otter just before the dogs, and, from his faint struggles, knew that he was almost beaten. Nothing could be more amusing than to see the ardour displayed by every body when a glimpse of the otter was had. Although heated to excess, not a soul present hesitated for a moment to throw himself towards the "varmint," and brave the danger of uncertain depths, as willingly as any of the finny inhabitants. It was a matter of surprise to me how he escaped the countless cudgels whirled at him, and the blows aimed with no unpractised skill, falling close and thick as hail-stones. But, remarkable quickness of sight, and movements more agile than the swallow's wing, enabled him to avoid the impending hazards for a time, and empowered him to live in the midst of death.

Notwithstanding my orders to abstain from throwing any thing at the otter as he rose, the squeal of an unhappy dog every now and then told that they were unheeded. Indeed, with such an excited and lawless set of sportsmen, it was barely possible to make any one listen to a word of caution or advice. Each took his own course, and was enjoying the fun after his peculiar notions of the way in which the otter should be hunted. Occasionally this liberty of action ruffled the feathers of my temper, especially when I saw a dog struck with no gentle tap ; but, with all the want of rule and nice observances, I have not been more thoroughly delighted with any sport of the flood I ever entered into. Next to a fox-hunt, give me an otter-hunt ; it will afford more sport than fishing for a twelve-month.

In a deep narrow hole of about twelve feet of water the otter went down, and at the very shallow ends of it stood a crowd with

upraised cudgels, while many lined both sides of the stream. The dogs were swimming with watchful eyes in the centre of the hole, and I now saw the life of the victim must become forfeited within a very limited period. Finding he could not get over the shallows, he turned towards the bank opposite to where I was standing, and attempted to climb it; but from weakness and exhaustion fell backwards into the water, and very narrowly escaped the jaws of a terrier. Indeed, I much question whether he did not have a slight grip in the loins as he took a long, last farewell dive; for, as he again appeared, the terrier caught him by the extreme rear, and met with as friendly a grasp in the throat from the otter as his most bitter enemy could desire. The other dogs, however, went helter-skelter to assist their companion, and quickly released him from the leech-like bite, by despatching the "varmint" in a bunch of seconds. "Who-whoop!" resounded far away; and from the

tugging motley pack I snatched a fine old dog otter, who gave more than an hour's famous sport and amusement.

"I'd have given something liberal to have been a partner in that business," observed Mr. Wirkem, as Jacob finished his sketch. "That was fun worth joining in."

"It was, indeed, although I say it," replied Jacob.

"And why shouldn't you?" returned the old coachman. "No one ought to be more capable of talking about a circumstance than he who is an eye-witness."

"Who's time-keeper?" inquired the Vice-President.

"I stand corrected," returned Mr. Wirkem, rising from his chair. "Yes," continued he, extracting his capacious watch from the snug ensconcing fob, "we're seven minutes and a half over our time."

LONDON :
F. SHOBERL, JUN., 51, RUPERT STREET, RAYMARKET,
PRINTER TO H. R. H. PRINCE ALBERT.

